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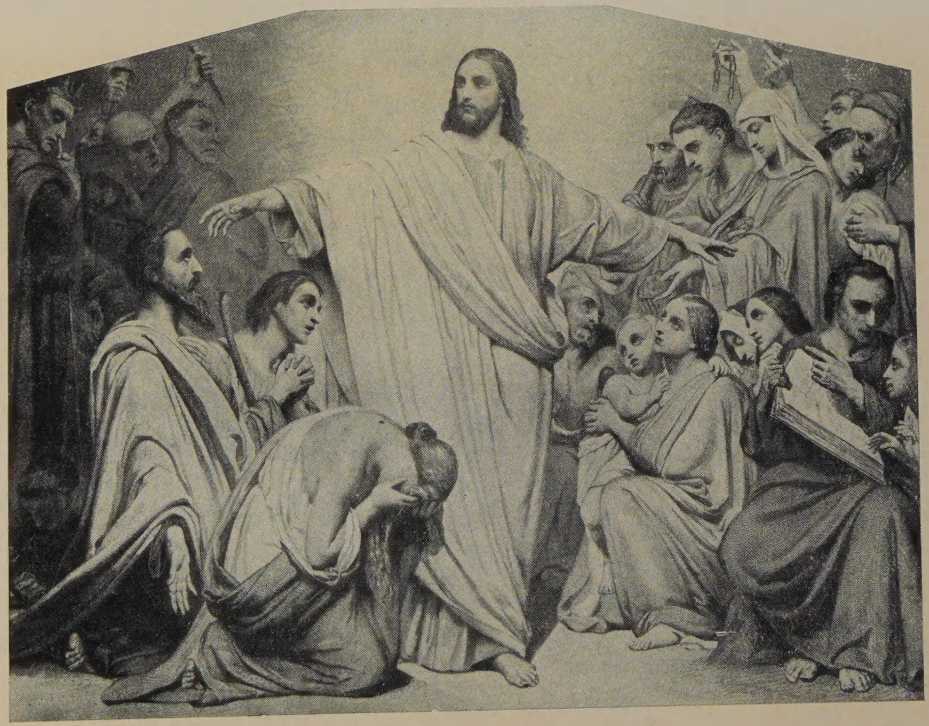

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CHRISTIANITY

CHRIST THE REMUNERATOR

INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY

IN

ENGLAND

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BY

J. GORDON HAYES, M.A.

(*Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society; Vicar of Storridge*)

"CHRISTIANITY IS HEAVILY WEIGHTED WITH ANCESTRAL BLUNDERS"

"It is written in the nature of things that any society, however formidably equipped, will disintegrate unless it recognises that all other loyalties are subordinate to the loyalty each man owes to the truth as he sees it himself."

THE REV. W. RUSSELL MALTBY, M.A.

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PREFACE

THE MAIN purpose of this book is to draw attention, from a new standpoint, to the recent decline in church membership and in attendance at public worship. This new standpoint, strange to say, is that of Christianity, which so many of its sects take too much for granted, sometimes without due cause, and which, at other times, seems in danger of being forgotten in the strife of tongues. Some distinction is made in the following pages between Christianity and the churches.

The subject is considered as fully as possible in the allotted space. This has been restricted so as to be accessible to a wide circle of readers; though one's first experience, as this is, of not being able to say all that seems necessary does not appear very satisfactory. Some branches of the subject demand much fuller treatment than can be given in one small volume.

However this may be, the book is not intended for historical or other students so much as for the vast multitude of people whose position is not far from the border of Christian worshippers. It may interest others also, for its standpoint is that of the general reader, and I shall be sorry if any ecclesiastical bias is shown. Victor Hugo's famous

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if somewhat cynical creed: "I believe in God but not in His servants," will do very well for a jumping-off place, though the Apostles' Creed has never caused me a sleepless night.

I am deeply indebted to the teaching of the late Professor Gwatkin, whose lectures I attended at Cambridge and whose letters I still prize. The brilliance of his intellect does not appear to be widely known, for he did not advertise; and as much of what follows is based on the results of his scholarship, it is only due to his memory for an outline of his academic career to be given. This will be found in the Appendix.

The Dean of St. Paul's is heartily thanked for the time he gave me, and especially for recommending Dr. Cadoux' *Catholicism and Christianity*,* which is by far the most complete and scholarly work bearing on the subject. Other works are mentioned in the Introduction.

I am very grateful to my Rural Dean, the Rev. Prebendary Warner, M.A., Rector of Cradley, Malvern, and to Mr. Theodore Roberts, for the trouble they have taken in reading the manuscript, also to my friend and neighbour, Mr. F. M. Johnstone, for his discriminating criticism. Mr. H. G. Ponting is most sincerely thanked for the gift of his photograph, an example of his art that is highly appreciated. He has been good enough, also, to send the following description: "The interior of this temple is a blaze of gilt and red lacquer, the baldachin, or hanging ornament in the centre of the hall,

* George Allen & Unwin, 1928.

being of shining gilt, and the sutra boxes in the foreground, before which the priests kneel, are of vermilion lacquer. The altar is a blaze of coloured lacquers, and the shrine behind it is of gold lacquer, and shaped like a pagoda. This is the most magnificent Buddhist interior in all Japan."

The books that have been used are mentioned in the Introduction and in footnotes, but two of them, the *Encyclopædia Britannica** and the *Outline of Christianity*,† must also be acknowledged here. Many of the papers contributed to both these works by leading authorities have been consulted with benefit and gratitude.

It must be confessed that this little book is to some extent a personal *apologia*. There is also the fond hope that it may prove helpful. Writing it has been a psycho-spiritual discipline new to me; but the book appears, such as it is, to be the most useful contribution I can make at the present time to the common cause. Some of my views may seem rather advanced; others appear to me somewhat late in the day. Unfortunately we are never consulted as to when we should prefer to come into this world, and we must not expect to escape all the disadvantages of being alive.

October, 1930. J.G.H.

* 14th Ed., 1929. † The Waverley Book Co., 1929.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"*The battle of intellectual liberty within the Church of England has been decisively fought and decisively won.*"

ARCHDEACON RAWLINSON: "THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND."

"*Christianity need not be conventional in order to be genuine.*"

BASIL A. YEAXLEE, PH.D.

A LITERARY authority has recently said that the supreme merit of Oxford University was in its treatment of learning imaginatively.* May a member of Cambridge University be permitted to introduce his subject by pleading that he will try to avoid treating it mechanically? He hopes that it will not be treated, in one sense, imaginatively; for his purpose would be defeated if he strayed from his perception of the truth.

Scientific rather than artistic methods seem best for such subjects as the one before us. The difficulty in the way of this is that emotion on the part of either writer or reader is hard to eliminate and may be fatal to the result. Personal liberty of thought and expression must be maintained, and should not be side-tracked by the possible opinions of others who may think differently. One of the first prin-

* *The Testament of Beauty*, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 24, 1929.

ciples for the progress of thought is that no offence shall be taken where none is meant. Difficulties and differences should be hammered out only on the anvil of reason.

It is true that some misunderstandings could be avoided if the personality of a writer could be known to all his readers; but as this is impossible at present, or until books begin with a sketch of their authors, it is important to notice precisely what is said, and thus to avoid imputing opinions that a writer may not hold.

No writer is responsible for the historical and other facts that may be necessary to his subject, if they are presented with fairness; and they need to be kept quite distinct from the use that is made of them. Everyone is entitled to a personal opinion, though the evidence in support of it may be strong or weak. Truths are presented in various manners, according to the individuality of the writer; and everyone has the right to use them at his own discretion. This is merely his point of view. Most of the views expressed in this book on the character of Christianity have been held by the greatest scholars, and have never been controverted. If ever they are controverted the Christian Faith will fall before sectarian interests.

In these days of specialisation it is impossible to touch on any subject, except one's own, without being vulnerable to the assaults of students who have spent their lives investigating one branch of learning. We cannot, however, because of this,

leave practical matters untouched, if they need attention and cannot receive it without the province of specialists being entered. All we can hope is that serious errors in matters of fact may be avoided.

The right of one who is not a professed theologian to enter the sacred territory of theology may be questioned; and if so there are two replies: that the region explored here is mainly historical, spiritual, and practical; and that ordinary educated people cannot admit the claim of the theological student to absolute sovereignty over religious subjects. As Professor Gwatkin said: "If the fact of sin is overlooked the most learned of the critics is not likely to see much more of the matter than the most ignorant of the vulgar."*

Among the various methods of expressing thought there are two that differ very considerably: they may be termed the scholarly and the popular. Each is capable of indefinite gradations, so that the one may merge into the other; but in spite of this the types are so distinct that the popular style is comprehensible to most people while the scholarly style is not. The latter has defensive armour against criticism, at the expense of its general intelligibility; whereas the type of writing that the ordinary reader can understand is readily riddled by scholars.

It may be questioned whether it is fair criticism to apply high intellectual tests to attempts at the enlightenment of the multitude, for the process resembles the bombardment of pleasure steamers

* *The Knowledge of God*, II, 83.

with twelve-inch shells. The ancient oriental writings of the Bible are mainly of the popular type, in the sense in which we are using the word, and some Biblical criticism is a waste of pomp and powder; it bears, also, too much resemblance to a cold criticism of aged parents who look only for affection.

The reading public does not ask for the affection of its writers; but unless the usefulness of books is to be restricted they must be reasonably intelligible. Hence all highbrow methods will here be " sent to Gehenna " and we shall sail under yachting colours.

Another point that now requires our attention is the reconciling of loyalty to one's church with the free expression of opinion. The mottoes on the title-page give the writer's convictions. If we are made members of an institution, without our consent, when we are young, there should be no surprise if we criticise it when we are old enough to think for ourselves. It is not our purpose here deliberately to criticise any branch of the Church; and the Church of Christ is venerated far too highly for such treatment. Some criticism of the Christian Institutions, as a whole, no doubt, will be unavoidable as we proceed. Thus it may be well to notice, in view of what may follow, that in the present state of civilised society the individual has several loyalties competing for his allegiance, and the best he can do is to strike a balance between them.

These competing loyalties are not less, and they may be more, than three. The oldest is the primitive

loyalty to the chief, which is personal. Next is the corporate loyalty to an institution. Lastly, the highest form of loyalty, is that of man's spirit to the truth as he is able to understand it. These and other claims frequently conflict. A choice must then be made, and a man should be guided by the best that is in him. In a quarrel between the Church and the State, for example, he may feel that, on the highest grounds, the latter is right; and that it is untrue to call the one Cæsar and the other God if the State should happen to uphold the truer Christian principles. The Reservation of the Sacrament was a recent illustration of this.

Men in the above position are not persecuted now, nor need they sever their connection with their church until they wish to. They still retain their loyalty to it in general, i.e., apart from one or two disputed points which may be matters of conscience. They could not transfer their allegiance to any other church; and divided loyalty is all that is possible under modern conditions. In a compromise between three schools of thought, it is inevitable that there must be much to which some, and perhaps many, cannot assent.* Men should be guided only by the highest considerations, so that personal prejudices do not interfere with corporate cohesion, and affection for the institution does not restrict the supreme loyalty to God's Truth.

. . . . .

* See Lippmann, *Preface to Morals*, Chap. XIII.

It seems remarkable that "the most pressing religious problem of our times"* should have received so little attention. The Dean of Canterbury's book, *The Impatience of a Parson*, the pamphlet just quoted, and an able magazine article † by the Rev. H. H. Farmer, were all that the booksellers could discover at the outset, and the pamphlet treats only one small corner of the field. Mr. Farmer's essay covers a larger part of the ground. There is little in common between his position and mine, though we support each other on certain points. Dr. Sheppard's arresting book and Mr. Joad's *The Present and Future of Religion* will be dealt with in the Appendix; the former is also referred to *passim*. The latter was not published until the present work was completely drafted, and should be read by all who may consider my position extreme. It will then be seen that I am extreme only in moderation.

My standpoint is intermediate between these writers. The Dean is an institutionalist member of an institution; I have become, theoretically at least, a non-institutionalist member of the same; and Mr. Joad is a non-institutionalist non-member, one gathers, of any religious institution. It may be well to add that I have not yet found any great difficulties about early Church doctrine.

Many circumstantial statements in the following pages are deliberately indicative rather than exhaus-

* *The Problem of Sunday Services*, W. K. Louther Clarke.

† *The Task of Modern Evangelisation*, in The Review of the Churches, October, 1929.

tive—a dark saying, perhaps, that should be further explained. My intention has been to avoid overstatement even at the risk of understating the position. If any statements should be challenged the reserves can then be called out.

Literature that has a greater or less bearing on the subject is naturally much more extensive than that just mentioned. This will be seen from the footnotes, which are the only other references to it. There are no authorities on the whole subject, yet, because it relates to contemporary events. Special mention must be made of Mr. Walter Lippmann's brilliant book, *A Preface to Morals*,* which has been found most suggestive. Its chief merit seems to be that in it scholarship is lawfully wedded to originality. It is written with vigour, a wide sympathy, and with delicacy of treatment.

. . . . .

Before we can set our course in the direction we wish to travel we must pick our way like a ship setting out on a voyage through land-locked channels towards the open ocean.

New orientations of old truths must arise, partly as a result of and partly to meet such conditions of life and thought as are subject to change. It is easy to suppose that everything changes; but human nature is almost a constant factor. Attempts have recently been made to adapt certain conceptions of Christianity to more modern require-

* George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 2nd impression, December, 1929.

ments. They do not seem to have been rewarded with complete success, though this may be too much to expect. Had the attempt been made to adapt the mode of worship to Christian Truth, there would, perhaps, have been more hope.

There seems a great need just now for a separation of the wheat of Christianity from the chaff. Plain people are led astray by many angels of light. Those who are instructed in Christian truth are safe, but they are few. The majority are still as sheep having no shepherd.

The value of our investigation will depend, to a large extent, on its accuracy; and this makes it necessary to settle, at least provisionally, the meaning of a few words that must frequently be used. A reader should be enabled to carry a writer's views and intentions with some exactitude throughout a book.

The problem presented by the present state of Institutional Christianity will be restricted, for the most part, to England, under the belief that this problem can be studied more effectively when definitely limited. It is easier to imagine one country than the whole of Western Civilisation under the microscope, and we English people are not directly responsible for the conduct of the larger area.

The term " Christianity " has been not merely misused but abused. It is intended here to connote its essentially spiritual and moral principles as the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (unless the connection of the word has obviously another

meaning) rather than its external forms and institutions. Dr. de Pressensé's definition seems the nearest to our conception, though Christianity is a hazardous thing to define: " The religion of which Jesus Christ is not only the Founder, but also the object, since it is by Him and in Him that man recovers his union with God."* This appears to bring out the true character of Christianity; but the term " religion " now seems too narrow. A fuller description will be found in the next chapter.

Institutional Christianity is the sum-total of the organised churches, of which the Church of England forms, at present, one of the most important parts.

Protestants should realise the difference between Christianity and Institutional Christianity, because otherwise they have no proper defence against the claim of Romanism to be the only true form of the faith. The Church whose visible body has been maintained in unbroken continuity from the time of the apostles cannot admit any competitor on institutional grounds. On the basis of true Christianity the very reverse is the fact; the Roman Institution has been for centuries Pagan instead of Christian. The external husk, fortunately, is not of primary importance.

As religion in England is part of the larger social group we term " Civilisation," so Institutional Christianity is part of, and a form of, religion. This distinction must be quite clear: Christianity, on the one hand, is usually regarded as one of

* *Chambers' Encyclopædia:* Article, " Christianity."

many religions; on the other hand, it can be considered, and with more reason, as something fundamentally unique. This latter conception we will term "pure Christianity," "Christianity proper," or "the Gospel." Christianity should, obviously, consist of Christians, who will be defined almost immediately. It is necessary to say this because, in practice, somewhat chaotic conceptions exist, if they do not indeed prevail. Pure Christianity may not exist very largely apart from the Christian religion.

A distinction between Christianity and religion* is seen to be necessary when we get down to the fundamental difference between Christian and non-Christian, which is usually obliterated. The common obliteration and elimination of basic distinctions is a great hindrance to the progress of truth. In order to fix our starting place we must settle the character or nature of the principal elements and factors with which we have to deal and, at least sufficiently for our purpose, the limitations of each.

A Christian is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; no narrower definition seems adequate. Christians are of many kinds, though they appear to have sorted themselves into two main groups: the larger group comprising all who seem to need the gregarious or "herd" instinct even in the spiritual kingdom; and the smaller group those who do not. They may be classified as corporate and individualistic Christians.

* This point is further considered in Chap. VIII, Sect. 3.

Belief in Christ should always, and perhaps usually does, create what is known as the "spiritual man," who should be distinguished from the "natural man" or non-Christian; though the spiritual man does not cease to be a natural man on becoming a Christian. From this it follows that Christians may be able to understand non-Christians, but the latter, being only natural men, cannot possibly understand either the spiritual nature of Christians or true Christianity, unless and until they are converted to belief in Christ. The opinions of unbelievers on the subject of pure Christianity, whatever other qualifications they may have, are obviously worthless.

We can now go a step further. The natural man, and more especially the natural woman, normally has emotions that can be lavished upon religion without the slightest connection with Christianity. Our Lord laid down the fundamental principles of true worship when He said that it must consist in spirituality and truth. Emotion has nothing essentially to do with either, though it may or may not subserve both. As the ideal organic unit as the pair, male and female, each incomplete in itself, but together making up the unit; so spirit may be regarded as the female, and truth the male, element in worship. Non-Christians naturally will have religions, if they desire them, to suit themselves; and Christians have Christ. This distinction will be referred to again. The natural man has attached himself to the Churches and influenced them considerably.

This leads us to one more fundamental distinction. The word " church " may mean: either, one of the visible Churches, or the Church of Christ comprising all believers. The term is often used inaccurately as if there was one visible Church now as there was for the first six centuries after the time of Christ.* Church authority, strictly speaking, exists in England only in the Church of Rome and to a smaller extent in the ministries of the Protestant Churches. The Christian Church, every member of which is regarded as a priest, is a conception of a spiritual reality; but it has no temporal power, though immense and world-wide influence. All Christians admit the authority of Christ.

The decade 1920-1930 will be used in the data we are about to consider. It is not proposed to make a complete survey of this decade in the next chapter, as its main features will come before us later. These years are chosen for several reasons: they form a suitable post-war period for our purpose; actual data are drawn from them; and a decade, as a unit, has advantages over a single year.

* For reference to the *ecclesia* see Chap. X, Sect. 2.

CHAPTER II

THE DECLINE IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES

"*The crucial question is . . . whether Christianity can come to terms with the awakening self-consciousness of modern civilisation . . . animated for the first time by ideals which are not borrowed from classical and Hebrew antiquity.*"

THE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S: "FAITH AND ITS PSYCHOLOGY."

GREAT institutions are like Charles II (if an overworked illustration may be permitted), in being an unconscionable time dying; and they are able to preserve the appearance of vitality when it is nearly extinct. The Eastern Roman Empire was an example of this. Sometimes they do not die when they may reasonably be expected to, for they adapt themselves to new conditions that threaten their existence, and possibly become more vigorous than ever.

Such has been the experience of Institutional Christianity. Its real life, apparently, has left the body as a whole and lingered on only in a certain number of its members. Christianity is not identical with Institutional Christianity in spite of the fact that it has consisted largely, and indeed almost exclusively, of one or more institutions. Most of these, up to the present, have conformed to the laws of life by adapting themselves to their environment, at least sufficiently to prolong their existence.

During the last generation, or perhaps two generations, the social environment of Christianity

in England has changed considerably, and the intellectual outlook of the people has changed more. In the last ten to twelve years, or since the European War, there have been further alterations in the habits of the community and earlier changes have been accentuated.

Institutional Christianity, when viewed superficially, appears to have been almost untouched by these changes. Its temples still stand and its ceremonies are conducted within them as in former generations. The modern tendency towards specialisation, and in some quarters to over-refinement, has resulted in a widespread æsthetic development in public worship; though the highest spiritual vitality of the Churches may be seen, not in the heart of civilisation but in their work overseas. Beneath the surface, however, like cracks in the foundation of a building, are ominous signs.

Institutional Christianity does not flourish in England as it did in the nineteenth century. Many of those, and the children of those, who once formed our congregations, now spend Sunday in motoring, in golfing, and in other sports and recreations. The week-end habit of visiting and entertaining, of paying and receiving calls, has become general; and even the Sunday at home more rarely than in former years includes an hour at church. The dominance of this new social phase appears in the fact that the few who now attend public worship are looked upon by the majority as rather odd and out of date. Churchgoers in society frequently feel this. The once-dreaded Continental Sunday is upon us.

Reliable data are required to establish the present state of Christianity. We need to know the number of Church members and attenders some years ago and to-day. The longer the base line, up to a point, the more accurate the observations taken upon it. We need also some data as to the quality as well as the quantity of our Christianity, remembering that it includes more than the sum-total of its professed institutions and their members.

Accurate quantitative data are not easy to get. The Assistant Secretary of the Royal Statistical Society has been good enough to say that there are "no official returns relating to numbers of sittings in or attendance at places of worship, other than those given at the census of 1851." In that year there appear to have been sittings for about 58 per cent of the population of England; and the attendance on the Sunday when the census was taken was 25 per cent in the morning and 61 per cent all day.*

No statistics of *attendance* in recent years exist, to compare with this, except for the Church of England. For the last decade (1920–1930) we have the number of *Church members*, about 6,000,000,† for all denominations; and census returns of 1921 which give the total population in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. As these are the best if not the only pertinent figures available we must make what use of them we can. Here they are in tabular form:

* Letter to the present writer. Fuller details of the data will be found in Appendix IV.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th edition, 1929: Article, "England."

Table No. 1, Showing the Decline in Public Worship

Year	Area	Population	No. of Church members	Attendance on one Sunday	Percentage of population
1851	England .	. 16,921,888	? (From 4-? millions.)	4 millions in a.m. 10 millions all day	25 61
1921	England, Wales, Channel Islands, Isle of Man.	41,242,893	6,147,699	? (Probably not more than 3 millions.)	? 7 (Highest possible 14)

It is obvious from these figures that greater exactitude would be of little importance. Only 14 per cent of the present population profess any adherence to the churches, as compared with at least 25 per cent who attended on one morning in 1851. We have nothing better than estimates for the number of attenders in 1921; but if a fixed ratio is applied to both years, a fair comparison may, perhaps, be made. Thus, assuming half the members to have attended in the morning in 1851, there would have been 8,000,000 or more members, nearly 50 per cent of the population then, to compare with the 6,000,000 or only 14 per cent now. The comparison might be worse than this if statistics were available, in the last decade, for England alone.

The proportion of *Church members* who attend with fair regularity, let us say at least once each Sunday, has varied, in the writer's experience, from 16 to 40 per cent.* If we estimate the regular churchgoers of the last decade at about 7 per cent of the *population* we shall be " astounded at our own moderation " when, if ever, accurate statistics are collected. This would be half the total membership. For the towns, probably 5 per cent would be nearer the truth. The equivalent percentage in 1851 may have been from 30 to 35 and possibly it was more than this. During these seventy years the churches must have lost about four-fifths of their supporters in proportion to the whole population. It will be both convenient and reasonably accurate if we

* See Appendix IV for details.

refer to the majority outside the Churches as the "nine-tenths," and the *residuum* of the population as its "tenth part."

One of the most commonplace remarks of recent years has been: "The churchgoing habit is dying out," or words to that effect. This is not true of watering places and of certain popular churches, but taking the whole of England it is correct. The number of churchgoers has diminished while the population of the country has increased; or to be more precise, we have now, with more than double the population of 1851, only about half the number of worshippers. The seriousness of the situation for Institutional Christianity is seen from these two converging lines.

The number of baptisms in the Church of England has been declining, for the last few years, at the rate of ten thousand a year. The figures will be found in Appendix iv. The Free Churches, judging from the information obtainable, have suffered to about the same extent; some of them being in a worse plight than the Established Church, while others are uniting several branches into one body. The Roman Catholics alone are growing, if the following figures can be trusted, and they are growing rapidly.

The Church of Rome never misses an opportunity, particularly in England, the lost jewel of her crown, and she now has a fair field for the conversion of our country, aided by her admirers within the Church of England. Her numbers have doubled during the last fifty years, as the following figures show:

Table No. 2, Roman Catholics in England

YEAR	NUMBER	AUTHORITY
1851	252,780	Royal Statistical Society. (Census.*)
1881	1,066,000	Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics.*
1929	1,930,000	*The Statesman's Year-book.*
	2,055,000	*Whitaker's Almanack.*

During the first period given here the rate of increase was higher than during the second period; but we may, perhaps, assume that by the present year (1930), the numbers of 1881 will be doubled. At *half* the rate of increase of the last fifty years there will be approximately 2,500,000 Romanists in England in about twenty-five years, and 2,200,000 in ten years' time. At the Church of England's present rate of decrease the two Churches will have approximately an equal number of members in ten years, and in twenty years there will be about 400,000 more Romanists than Anglicans. At the *present* rate of the Roman increase these results will be attained in half these times. Father Stebbing writes that "in 1851 the census pointed to not less than 800,000" Romanists in England, and that "the total is now at least two and a half millions."†

* This is the number that attended on the Sunday morning in 1851. In the afternoon 53,960 attended, and at night 76,880. Total 383,620.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Roman Catholic Church." It is necessary to add that Catholic statements can be quite untrustworthy. Dr. Cadoux gives evidence to doubt the above increase. See "Catholicism" 7–8.

It is not our business to consider the possibilities of this position, but it is obvious that Rome will be able to gratify her ambition by making a claim to become the National Church. To the above figures must be added an ill-omened factor, that will shortly become decisive, unless the present trend is altered. This factor consists of the large body of Romanisers within the Established Church, who will be able to hasten the day of papal supremacy in England. "We all kick up for freedom," wrote John Galsworthy, "and the only institutions gaining strength are Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church."*

We have now finished with statistics which, in spite of the growth of Anglo and Roman Catholicism, shows a very large decrease in the ratio of worshippers to the whole population during the last seventy to eighty years. The general issue, however, must not be prejudiced by forming too hasty a conclusion that all is lost because the people as a whole are giving up their churchmanship. Whether this indicates a definite spiritual decline depends also upon other considerations. Ruskin once remarked upon the vitality of religion in the private life of the Venetians "and its deadness in public policy."

It is usually assumed that Christianity includes no more than the organised churches. This is an inadequate view. True Christianity could flourish while the churches remained, as most of them are

* *A Modern Comedy.*

at present, nearly empty. Christianity is not only a corporate religion. Primarily it is individualistic; and secondarily, as to its corporate form, it is before all else a kingdom.* Its moral effects are now seen in the lives of a large number of individuals, and thus the general tone of the community is considered to have been raised by it to a higher level than ever in the past.

No useful purpose would be served by mere expressions of personal opinion on this subject. A decline in Institutional Protestantism upon a national scale is too serious to be assessed or judged on any narrow basis. Some conception should first be formed of the true character of Christianity. We could then consider if the failure to attract the multitude is, in fact, a failure from the strictly Christian standpoint; for this must not be considered a foregone conclusion. A glance at history will be necessary to find out if the churches have made mistakes from which they are now suffering. We should inquire whether the present drift away from them has been accompanied, or is liable to be followed, by any moral or spiritual decline. It may be necessary to question a few time-honoured assumptions; for a comprehensive and searching examination, not limited arbitrarily or artificially, is essential.

It would be useless to attempt this in the interest of truth if there was any private or public axe to grind, either in attack or defence of any institution.

* This point is taken up again in Chaps. VII and VIII.

Our minds need to be, in Oliver Wendell Holmes' expression, " depolarised." The standpoint assumed should be that of Christianity as understood by the writer and not that of any sectional interest. Proceeding in this manner, some of the broader reasons for the present state of affairs may be evolved and one or two practical hints with a view to improvement may suggest themselves.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

"*First, unreserved acceptance of Christ to put us on a right footing; till this is done nothing is done. Second, the slow unfolding in life of what was involved in that first decisive step.*"

PROFESSOR GWATKIN.*

"*The Christian religion is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only: Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the Eyes of God.*"

PROFESSOR VON HARNACK.†

THE IMPORTANT question at the head of this chapter has been answered so often that another reply would not be given here unless it was essential to the subject before us. It would be impossible, however, to form any definite conclusion as to the failure of Institutional Christianity without first knowing in what Christianity consists; for this is the norm or standard from which any departure can be observed, and to a certain extent measured. It seems better, also, to give one's own conviction of what Christianity is than merely to adopt or adapt the descriptions of others, though several leading opinions will be

* His reply to the above question in a letter to the writer.
† *What is Christianity?* p. 8.

quoted. Our approach to this will not be of the academic order.

It may be noticed, if we keep on terms with reality, that a very small proportion of Christians are scholars or even students of any kind. As Christians are numerous and often thoughtful, there is a large actual number of them which takes an intelligent interest in subjects of a more or less religious character, and a few of them make some use of scholars' works; but most Christians manage to live, and to live remarkably well, without them. Probably four Christians out of every five have no interest in theological writings, and possibly could not understand most of them if they wished to. The Bible is not regarded as theology but as God's revelation to man. Theology has become a specialised, and a highly intellectual, branch of learning, including among its pundits many who have no real belief in Christ as their Saviour.

Christians are under the same necessity as other people, to be practical. They have to meet life in the best way they can, and they find a godly life at least possible. It is not devoid of difficulties; but these seem to them less than the difficulties of others. Christians, for the most part, are more happy and contented than those who have no belief in our Lord. What more could they have? The reply seems to be: Very little, and that mainly of intellectual interest. There is the danger of being led away from the truth to theories and perhaps fables.

What Christianity is *in practice* can be seen in thousands of Christian homes in the land, where its good influence softens hardness, sweetens bitterness, removes truculence, and brings forth the fruits of God's Spirit; love, joy, peace and the rest. Servants have come into residence in these homes with selfish, worldly and rebellious instincts. Christian treatment has melted and metamorphosed them until they have blended with, and contributed to, the general tone of the house. Much more of a similar character could be adduced. What is the secret of it? We will make an attempt to explain.

The sole origin of Christian living is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. This must be further expounded. "The revelation of God in Christ is not chiefly found in what He said, not chiefly even in what He did, but chiefly in what He was and is. We have afterwards to find the truths involved in this; but we receive the revelation not by making a system of theology, but by holding converse with Jesus Christ Himself. He did not bring the revelation; He was and is the revelation. In Him God is self-disclosed."*

Christianity, strictly speaking, is Christ in human life. Everything else of any importance follows from this. Our Lord, when on earth, was unique in history. His coming was the Gospel or Good Tidings of great joy to men. He submitted to the Mosaic ordinances that He came to end, but He instituted no new religious system to take the place

* The Archbishop of York: Preface to *Outline of Christianity.*

of Judaism. "The Lord came not to found a religion but to be Himself the revelation."* Again, "The Gospel replaces the sacrificial system with its doctrine of salvation through Christ."†

If we can clear our minds of preconceptions we may see that the Presence of God Incarnate on earth was everything; that He came, as He said, "to seek and to save that which was lost" (St. Luke xix, 10); that He restored man to God; that He revealed as much as man could receive of the Father's will; that He atoned for our sins by His death; and that, by His Holy Spirit, He put the soul into communion with God, thus giving divine power to live the good life.

Our Lord, in dealing with the great facts of human conduct, made His first call to repentance or change of mind. "The intricacies of ritual and theology are ignored."‡ He was the only teacher on record who dealt with the ultimate truth regarding conduct. Hence, evil had to be eradicated by dealing with human thought and emotion. "Repentance meant nothing less than a complete renewal." Our Lord "was always insisting that without this change of heart all moral reform was worse than useless. The man who lives respectably, while inwardly he is still false and unclean and self-seeking, has only added hypocrisy to his other sins. . . . This call to repentance in

* Professor Gwatkin, *English Church History*, I, 2.
† Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, II, 55.
‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Christianity."

view of the Kingdom of God became the watchword. . . ."*

The fullest forgiveness followed contrition. None but God could forgive sin and He was more ready to do this than men were to confess it. When forgiven, sin was regarded as entirely expunged and forgotten; there was to be no morbid introspection or retrospection. No human or other intermediary, our Lord Himself, as Man, only excepted, was required to come between the soul and God. Men were simply to pray to the Father through the Son and would be inspired to this action by the Holy Spirit. Christ "set forth communion with God as the most certain fact of man's experience and as simple reality made it accessible to everyone. Thus His teaching contains the note of universality."†

He told us that He came to give eternal life which would begin here and now; that men should walk with God on earth and hear His voice within them; that His Nature might be imparted to them, and they might be enabled to rise, making steps of their dead selves, to higher things;‡ and that no fear of death should dim the joy of life, but that He whom they know in this existence would in due course call them to a better.

The authoritative tone of Christ's teaching, in conformity with His Personality, was unique. He

* Professor E. F. Scott, "Jesus and John the Baptist," in *Outline of Christianity.*

† *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Christianity."

‡ Stepping-stones do not lead *higher.*

alone among men dared to improve upon what God had spoken by prophets and angels, and in such a manner that His new doctrine is acknowledged to be better than the old. Our Lord showed that spiritual love was the *summum bonum* of life. He founded a new and original form of the kingdom of God on earth, of which He the God-Man was King; and He said that He would eventually judge each individual by his or her relation to Himself, adding of the believer, " I will raise him up at the last day."*

He is spoken of in the New Testament as being God Almighty, the Revealer of God to men, the only Sacrifice for sin, the Saviour of mankind, the Giver of life eternal, the Exemplar of noble conduct, the only Mediator between God and man, the great High Priest, future Judge and World-Ruler. He said He was the Good Shepherd, the Living Bread, the True Vine, the only Way to God, the Truth, the Life and the Light of the world.

The seer on the Isle of Patmos saw Christ in the glory that was His before the Incarnation and to which He had then returned. Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said that by, or in, Him all things were created, and John wrote: " All things were made by Him." He Himself said that He took of the things of God and revealed them to men, and that He gave His life a ransom for many.

Sacrificial approach to God is beyond us here.

* St. John vi, 40.

It would take us back to the dim ages of the past when the sense of sin had not been so largely lost, and when men felt unworthy to draw near to God, yet were unable to restrain their inward urge to address Him. The Levitical sacrifices may well be regarded as nonsense by those who do not see that they all foreshadowed the final sacrifice of Calvary. The Mosaic ritual typified the atoning work of Christ in a marvellous manner, at which we can scarcely glance. The sacrifices for *sin* were not offered up in the tabernacle but outside the camp; "Wherefore Jesus also . . . suffered without the gate."* No sinner could approach God in worship until his sins were atoned for; then he could offer up the "sweet savour" offerings of the sanctuary.

The old order was "ready to vanish away" when the Saviour died. We are told that it was obedience God wanted, and this was perfect only in His Son. After the crucifixion there could be "no more sacrifice for sin," because sin was fully atoned for by the Lamb of God.

Christ's appeal had been to the individual through love; thus contrasting with Judaism which was primarily and essentially a corporate religion. The whole congregation of Israel was regarded as holy. There was an individual aspect of Judaism, but it was secondary.

Our Lord reversed this, making a voluntary act of the individual the basis of the new relationship

* Heb. xiii, 12.

with God; though He also left a rudimentary organisation in the twelve apostles. A corporate aspect of Christianity was to follow after the day of Pentecost, but this was a voluntary association of the redeemed, there was no compulsion about it. The only law was that of God's Will as made known to each believer in Christ by the Spirit. Discipline was inspired from within man, not imposed from without. All this, however, came later. The Mosaic parenthesis ended when the veil of the temple was rent in twain.

There is no need to burden ourselves with theories of our Lord's atonement for sin by His death. Everything depends upon His crucifixion being, as it was, a historical fact. Whether the profundity of its meaning will ever be fathomed by man is another matter. "To confess the limitations of human knowledge, however, is the part not only of devout humility but of the highest wisdom."*

The three greatest influences of the ancient world were represented on the cross when Pilate wrote his superscription in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. The Hebrews alone had the knowledge of the true God; Greek culture has never been surpassed, if equalled, neither have Roman law and government. These sprang from three distinct types of people, the religious, the intellectual, and the practical. All these were centred upon the crucified Saviour; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say

* Dr. R. W. Dale, "*The Atonement*," p. 9; to which reference should be made.

that in the crucifixion ancient history culminates and from the crucifixion the modern world proceeds.

The apostles did not preach Christ as a social or even a moral Reformer; these results would follow in due course. Nor did they preach the Incarnation; but the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Lordship of the Saviour. "We preach," said St. Paul, the greatest exponent of Christ, "not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord."* Again he said: "We preach Christ crucified,"† and if man or even angel should dare to proclaim any other Gospel "let him be accursed."‡ There was only one way of salvation from sin and death. Among the various benevolent activities of apostolic days "the first place is given to the salvation of the soul, since . . . it is of transcendent importance. While man is fallen . . . his possibilities are so vast."§ The Apostolic Church was the great witness of the Resurrection and upon the Resurrection the whole fabric of Christianity rested.

The subject of the miraculous cannot be dealt with here adequately, neither can it be entirely avoided. If a miracle is defined as anything superhuman, or beyond the normal order of nature, we are faced with the fact that occurrences which appear to be miracles in one age, such as flying or wireless telegraphy, are commonplace in another. Lecky said that miracles were only reported from "times of ignorance," and this is partly true; but neither

* II Cor. iv, 5. ‡ Gal. i, 8, 9.
† I Cor. i, 23. § *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Christianity."

the time of the Exodus from Egypt nor that of Christ, in the Bible lands, were as unenlightened as Europe in the Middle Ages. Ecclesiastical miracles were supposed to have flourished most luxuriantly between the fall of the Western Empire and the Renaissance. The Biblical miracles were of a different order.

Nearly all these fall into two groups, around the birth of the Jewish and Christian ecclesias. Assuming belief in the God of the Bible, it would not be unreasonable, it seems, for Him to celebrate the inauguration of each great era of His kingdom on earth by giving man some evidence of His existence and personality. To deny the possibility of miracles, as defined, is to deny the reality of personality, human and divine; it is to deny facts of experience; it is, hence, less reasonable than to accept them when the evidence for them is good.

Hume's position, that they are contrary to experience, has been riddled long ago. Would he have refused to credit the evidence of his own senses had Edison or Marconi lived in his day? Our descendants may understand how the Biblical miracles were performed; but that would not make them less miraculous when they occurred. They were simply examples of the Creator controlling His own mechanism for the moral and spiritual benefit of mankind. His will must be supreme in the universe. Man has similar, though limited, control on earth. Carlyle's suggestion seems to be

widely held now, that the miraculous element does not consist in linear or avoirdupois measures, but in the life-principle. It may be questioned if any Biblical miracle, the Resurrection only excepted, is more remarkable than the conversion of sinners, abandoned to evil, into real saints of God who afterwards live consistently holy lives; and this is taking place to-day.

If God came to earth in human flesh, for which the evidence is good, a stupendous miracle was unavoidable; and belief or unbelief in this may well divide Christians from others. Christianity is superhuman, yet the existence of Jesus of Nazareth is a well-authenticated historical fact. Tacitus and Suetonius give proofs, external to the Bible, that our Lord lived and died, which the existence of the Churches to-day, and even Anno Domini, make it rationally impossible to deny. His Personality being unique in human experience, the most credible conclusion is that He was God.

The Resurrection was one of the greatest of miracles, corresponding to that of the virgin birth; but while the latter, by its nature, is incapable of direct proof or disproof, the former is not so limited. "The real historical evidence for the Resurrection is the fact that it was believed and preached . . . long before any of our Gospels were written," and it was "the belief that He (Christ) was alive" that "animated and sustained" the Apostolic Church.*

* Dr. Anderson Scott, *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Jesus Christ."

The Resurrection is important because it is one of the strongest evidences for the existence of God. No one else can raise the dead. It is also a proof that Christ was God. He foretold His own Resurrection, and He claimed to be God, saying: "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."*

The Ascension ended our Lord's earthly ministry and began that in heaven as High Priest and Intercessor; it was connected also with the descent of the Holy Spirit ten days later. "An eternal character is thus given to the sacrifice of the death of Christ, which becomes efficacious through the exaltation of His crucified and risen manhood."†

. . . . .

The foregoing is a brief and imperfect outline of the Gospel, but it may be near enough to the truth for our purpose of establishing the true character of Christianity. Divine power accompanied the preaching of this Gospel. People were completely changed by it, and were spoken of as "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" they began to live new and better lives that had an ennobling influence on others.

The converts normally were baptised with water, and usually also by God's Spirit. They gathered

* St. John x, 17-18.

† J. G. Simpson in *Hastings Dictionary of Bible:* Article, "Ascension."

afterwards for a holy meal in remembrance of their Saviour; though Christianity was not originally what is now termed a sacramental religion. The only possible objection to the sacraments is that they have since been paganised and put to superstitious uses. They arose early and have never ceased, though their character has suffered change. Originally they were of secondary importance. The saving of souls was the predominant feature of the earliest Christianity. Conversion was followed by the sacraments. This sequence is of great importance because the divine order has been reversed and people imagine that the sacraments convey salvation. This is a mechanistic theory.*

The vehicles by which the Gospel was to be carried throughout the world were obviously of less importance than their valuable burden. They were merely the natural means used for the highest spiritual purpose. Of no great consequence in themselves, their value depended entirely upon how they performed their sacred functions.

These vehicles were mainly three: language, personal intercourse, and a society or institution. The principal Christian forms of thought have been Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and then for us English. Those who believed in Christ told others about Him in the course of conversation. The third vehicle was for a few centuries in the form of a single institution which then arrogated to itself the importance that rightly belonged only to its

* See Chap. VIII, also footnote on page 119.

message of its Master, and subsequently was divided into the fragments that now exist.

There may never be agreement on institutional matters, but there should be agreement to keep, in practice, the *means* in due subordination to its divine *end.* There is agreement that the descent of God's Spirit was of paramount importance, though the conception that His coming was the birth of the ecclesia is not now universal. There can be no dispute that the Holy Spirit came to " reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; "* and there is no dispute that the promise: " Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you "† was amply fulfilled.

The homely simile that a new broom always sweeps clean was as true of Christianity as of subsequent revivals, for there was nothing better than human nature to work upon. There is no gain in making extravagant claims that cannot be upheld. What we need is such evidence of good lives that it becomes necessary to say very little. The Apostolic Church preached and practised Christ, in the power of God's Spirit, with marvellous effect. The great teachers " in the highest degree possessed what the Germans call God-consciousness."‡ This was one of Christianity's distinctive marks; it was the savour of the salt that alone could purify the world.

* St. John xvi, 8-9. † Acts i, 8.
‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, " Christianity."

The Church in its youth abounded in vigour, and gave phenomenal evidence that the Spirit of God dwelt within its members. There was no turning aside to glorify itself. The call to evangelise the world was wholeheartedly responded to, though not immediately after Pentecost; discipline and organisation receiving all due attention. Several orders of ministers arose at an early date; but the matter of moment was that the Gospel should be carried throughout the Roman Empire, and this was done. Our Lord's last words expressed His command to preach it in every nation.

"This . . . is the distinctive doctrine of Christianity—that the revelation in Christ's Person sums up all the rest. Islam and Pharisaism sum up revelation in a book, Christianity in a Person. . . . This then was the early theory of Christian training—that the one thing needful is to bring men under the direct personal influence of Christ, and that the Church exists for no other purpose."*

II

No other good cause, perhaps, has been so badly served as Christianity. Some of its finest intellectual exponents have been perfectly impossible people in private life. God's Truth has a very mixed personnel to support it, thereby showing its suitability for "all sorts and conditions of men." Among the greatest mistakes made by professing Christians

* Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, II, 69, 72.

have been the assuming of too much and " otherwise than God's Word doth allow." Some of these assumptions have hardened into fixed beliefs, without due cause, and the Churches have been " teaching for doctrines the traditions of men."

We deplore the present scepticism, and justly; but serious though it is, it may be partly the human accessory of a divine discontent. One of the greatest modern contributions to progress is our intellectual iconoclasm. The human mind is now, like an acid, dissolving the hardest mental substances. It is a dangerous process, but false gods are unlikely to survive it.

Our Lord's marching orders to the Church were to preach His Gospel throughout the world; but it does not follow from this that the Churches to-day should be condemned because they are failing to attract the majority of mankind. It is true that they may be said to condemn themselves by their usual assumption that Institutional Christianity would extend until all men were members of some branch of it; but we must try and save them from their own mistakes.

There is much in Christianity that appears more suitable for a spiritual aristocracy than for the multitude. The appeal of Christ is a personal appeal to the individual, and demands a conscious and voluntary response. Human nature in general is such that it tends to reject this appeal, though able to accept it. Only a minority of those who hear of the Saviour prove themselves willing

to obey Him; for this necessitates spiritual conflict, the subjugation of natural instincts, and a following of our Lord in His rejection. He said there would be few who would find His narrow way. He was much more "concerned with the few who could be saved than with arranging the affairs of the mass of mankind."* His teaching has been well described as "other-worldly"; and it leads to a high spirituality, the highest conceivable, in prayer and communion with God.

It may not be inconceivable that all mankind should rise to this, if we are entitled to assume the unlimited time of evolution and the omnipotence of God; but God self-limited His Omnipotence when He gave man free-will, and has not yet altered this condition. The New Testament does not permit of unlimited time for submission to the Saviour, and it points to a selective process under present conditions. We cannot judge results under other conditions, though the Scriptures intimate that all will come right in the end.

Our Lord's call to *evangelise* the world has been mistaken for a command to *convert* all mankind. The latter is not only an impossible task for the Churches under present conditions—Christ did not expect it before His return. Without entering upon the controversial subject of prophecy, it may be noticed: (1) That the Lord's Second Advent receives vastly more attention in the New Testament than the sacraments. (2) That both the leading schools of

* Lippmann: *Preface to Morals*, 200.

interpretation, the Futurist and the Historical, agree that the Scriptures foretell the conversion of the world under the Personal government of our Lord. (3) That Christian prophecy is a closed book to most theologians, for it is incomprehensible by exclusively intellectual means.

The Churches therefore cannot be said to fail because their members are in a minority among men. One law that seems to have no exception is that quantity varies inversely as quality, and Christianity demands the highest human quality known. The general complaint, however, is that the Churches have not maintained their specific Christian quality; and to this we must now devote our attention.

CHAPTER IV

A GLANCE AT HISTORY

"*Christ has freed man from all the burdens under which he was bound down, and first of all from that of sin. . . . Whenever man turns aside from this, whenever he ceases to believe in a salvation which is the free gift of God, apprehended by faith, he girds on again his ancient chains.*"

DR. DE PRESSENSÉ.

1. THE EARLY CHURCH. 2. GRÆCO-ROMAN CHRISTIANITY. 3. THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION. 4. ENGLAND AFTER THE REFORMATION.

1. THERE is no need to trace, even in outline, the whole history of Christianity. This has been done often by others and is beyond our scope.* We may have later opportunities of referring to some of the outstanding events. It is necessary, however, to touch on a few other salient points, that their importance may be realised; and these will lead us up to the present day.

We shall be safe, perhaps, in assuming that the last chapter has given at least an approximate description of what millions of Christians understand by Christianity; and as such its Gospel

* The most recent work on this subject is the *Outline of Christanity*, edited by Dr. Peake and Dr. Parsons (Waverley Book Co.).

extended throughout the Mediterranean countries during the first few centuries of our era. The Bible, much as we have it now, was the only authoritative standard of doctrine. There were also the early creeds, and the baptismal formulæ which were summaries of the Gospel. Practice became increasingly regulated by the growing structure of the Church as an institution. We may notice, without entering upon a controversy clouded by prejudice, that episcopacy, as a matter of history, was not universal in the second century; though it was a tower of natural strength to struggling Christianity in the third century. The Church did not everywhere retain its original purity; it began to devote more attention to itself, and was influenced by the prevailing polytheism of the Roman Empire.*

From the time of Alexander Severus (222–235) church buildings began to arise in the form of basilicas or town halls, and conversions became more numerous. The period was one of prosperity for Christianity until the persecution of Decius (250); and even this proved how the Church of Christ had advanced in public favour, for the barbarisms of the earlier persecutions were omitted. The Decian persecution as an attempt to stamp out Christianity was a total failure and left the faith stronger than ever. The greatest triumph of Christianity was when the Pagans deserted their relatives to save themselves, and Christians alone risked and sacrificed their own lives in attempting

* For further reference to this see Chap. VI.

to rescue others. Thus did the heroic element of our present civilisation, that we now take for granted, originate in the behaviour of third century Christians who, during times of pestilence, did their best to copy and obey their Saviour; and it is a mark of the greatest moral revolution in the history of the world.

In A.D. 260 Christianity was brought within the pale of Roman Law, which meant that the molestation of Christians became an indictable offence. This was the first recognition of the Church by the State, and it had far-reaching effects. These effects were inevitable because the only relationship of believers to the civil powers, provided for by the founders of the faith, was that of obedience; and the simple removal of the legal ban was the first step towards rivalry between Church and State, which led to the later attempts of Latin Christianity to rule.

The Christian sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, had hitherto been very simple rites. During the third century they developed considerably; conceptions of mystery and magic are first found connected with them. The sacred meal is transferred from evening to morning, in Rome if not in other Churches; though evening communions are on record as late as the fifth century. At this service "the president (before long the bishop) stood at the far side of the table, facing the people across it, as the pope still does when he says mass at his own cathedral of St. John Lateran . . .

with his elders on each side of him, exactly like the Roman governor and his assessors."* The people brought their offerings, including bread and wine, which were afterwards partaken of.

Other changes soon appeared above the ecclesiastical horizon. "Cyprian's conception of the Christian ministry differs entirely from St. Paul's, and Chrysostom's idea of priesthood is the same as Julian's.† The assimilation of Christianity to heathenism from the third century is a matter of history. . . . The one thing certain is that however historically unavoidable it might be, it was in most respects rather a reversal of Christ's plain teaching than a development of principles laid down by Him."‡

Some development in the external forms of Christianity may have been necessary; for large congregations cannot meet, as apostolic Christians met, in small upper rooms. It could be argued, of course, that apostolic simplicity should have been maintained at all costs. Large assemblies have been found capable of breaking up into smaller ones readily enough. Human nature being almost a constant factor, it is not difficult to understand how dangers were unforeseen and vipers nourished in the bosom of the Church. Non-spiritual activities appealed to the natural man, particularly to cultured pagans, and began to dwarf the invisible

* Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 257-258.
† This pagan emperor is known as "Julian the Apostate," J. G. H.
‡ Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 269.

realities he could not understand. The original organic unity of believers in Christ gradually gave place to an external aggregation bound together in one visible organisation that claimed to dispense salvation. When the institution reached this point it ceased to be Christian in structure, though it continued its original functions with varying degrees of fidelity.

Paganism began to influence Christianity when heathens of wealth, ability, and social standing, such as Cyprian, were converted, and devoted their great and mainly carnal energies to what they thought was the advancement of the faith. Their ideas were essentially pagan, and should have been withstood; but the difficulties in the way of stemming the torrent of natural culture proved insuperable. Cyprian himself was a saint, but he held grossly mistaken notions. By the fourth century the belief arose "that the visible Church was the one escape from the fire of hell,"* and this became the predominant incentive to religion during the Dark Ages.

2. *Græco-Roman "Christianity."*—The Edict of Milan, in A.D. 313, is acclaimed as the Great Charter of Christian liberty, for it permitted Roman citizens to become members of the Latin Church; yet in spite of this it was one of the greatest blows ever struck at Christianity. All writers admit that the Church was much changed by the Emperor

* Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 273.

Constantine. It was almost revolutionised by him. " The Peace of the Church," as the edict was called, " was followed by some of the fiercest controversies on record, and resulted in a type of Christianity so different from that of the Church in days of trial, that it may fitly be called the ' New Christianity.' "*

The following examples are then given by Professor Foakes Jackson, who has just been quoted, to prove how very unlike the old religion was the new: the foundation of the mediæval papacy was laid; " for the first time Christ became a god of battles "; heresy became an indictable offence; Helena's pilgrimage to Palestine definitely introduced superstition, and " Christianity was rapidly becoming a religion of holy places, relics and talismans."† To this list must be added monasticism and asceticism.

The building of Constantinople, also, may well be reckoned among the new features, for the emperor's " Christianity " was not that of our Lord and His apostles. As Archdeacon Rawlinson says, Constantine was a half-superstitious pagan and embraced Christianity from motives of policy. The Empire became officially Christian. The new faith " under the patronage of the emperors, became fashionable, and large multitudes of half-heathen, nominal converts passed into the Church. It is probable that many of them understood very little of the religion they professed to accept, and that *a good deal of paganism penetrated into the Church* at this

* *Outline of Christianity*, II, 65.
† *Ibid.*, 70.

period, especially in the form of popular ceremonies, usages, and customs, which were given some kind of Christian interpretation."*

While admitting the evils that entered when the Church "compromised with the world," Dr. Rawlinson points out that the Church had "no choice in the matter"; that instead of Christ or Cæsar being the dread alternatives for Christians, "Christ and Cæsar had entered, for good or for evil, into an alliance."†

This appears to be true with the important exception that it was not Christ but the bishops who allied themselves with the State. The difference between Christianity and its paganised successor is seen in Bishop Callixtus, one of the early popes (218-222). There was something wrong with the Church, even at this early date, that such a man could become a bishop. We should call him an adventurer of the worst type to-day. He pushed his way up from the dregs of society and had, apparently, no conception of what Christianity was. He pardoned, after penance, every sin except apostasy and introduced perfectly heathen ideas and practices into the Church.‡

Thus the original Christian Institution became Romanised and Hellenised. It borrowed from Judaism, Paganism and Mithraism; and it is questionable if it was strictly entitled to term itself

* *Outline of Christianity*, II, 72 (our italics).
† *Ibid.*, II, 73.
‡ *Ibid.*, II, 40-41.

Christianity. Cyprian's amalgam of Pagan and Hebrew elements became, with the addition of Roman Law, the fundamental conception of Latin "Christianity." It descended lineally from Pagan Rome, with no essential change, and has continued down to the present. It is the institutionalism that a few will lay down their lives for, but that the many detest. It has been decorated and adorned by the ceremonial of Pagan Greece. It has paid lip service to Christianity and denied the power thereof; for historically, as we shall see, it has not been always moral.

Some organisation of the early Church may have been advisable, and the formation of hierarchies was independent of Cyprian; but Latin "Christianity" was moulded on the model of the Roman Empire and not on forms derived from our Lord and the apostles. Rome "Christian" was a mere copy of Rome Pagan. As Christ's Kingdom was assumed to have succeeded Cæsar's the Church imitated the organisation of the State, though in the fourth century this was only the ideal and it was never fully realised. In the "Holy" Roman Empire, however, a great deal was realised, so that Lord Bryce could say, in his brilliant phrase, that the Roman Church was "the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned on its grave."

The papacy took up the sceptre on the fall of the Western Empire and tried to reign in its stead. Every writer admits that civilisation was thereby preserved, but the correlative fact that Christianity

Photograph: Anderson

INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY, I

THE PROCESSION

the centre part of the picture by Giovanni Bellini

was nearly lost in the process seems to have been neglected. The Image of Christ, like that of the piece of silver in His parable, was covered with ecclesiastical dust by the fourth century and dirt by the fourteenth.

The mere fact that the Dark Ages existed is so eloquent that they can be passed over rapidly. Dean Hutton places them between A.D. 565 and the Renaissance. There was little peace or security for life during this unsatisfactory period, when, for about a thousand years, Latin Christianity claimed to rule the world. Islam arose in the seventh century to exterminate a large part of Institutional Christianity, and the Eastern and Western Churches separated. The latter, with which alone we are concerned, was sunk in mythology, of which Andrew Lang writes: "The savage mind, turned from belief and awe into the spinning of yarns, instantly yields to humorous fancy. As we know, mediæval popular Christianity, in imagery, *märchen* or tales, and art, copiously illustrates the same mental phenomenon. Saints, our Lord, and the Virgin, all play ludicrous and immoral parts in Christian folk-tales. This is mythology, and here is, beyond all cavil, a late corruption of religion."*

The Latin Church may have been, as it is claimed, the best influence in Europe during this time, but this says very little to the credit of Europe. When the head is corrupt what can be expected of the members? "The degradation of

* *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, I, 325.

the papacy was a most serious menace to the Christian cause."*

Papal power was increased by dishonest methods such as the forgeries of the well-known False Decretals; and many of the popes were immoral men, though this does not appear to invalidate the theory of apostolic succession. Neither does the great schism when, as Macaulay said: "Plain Christian people were unable to discover to which of the two worthless priests who were cursing and reviling each other the headship of the church rightfully belonged."

The religious wars and the Inquisition alike showed how far the ecclesiastical institution had gone from Christianity. The use of force was an adaptation of the Moslem principle compelling outward obedience by carnal methods and weapons. The Inquisition was morally worse than the pagan persecutions, for it was sinning against the light; but even apart from this, the Christian persecutions of the Latin Church were actually, and not only relatively, more depraved. "Ghastly as the records of heathen persecution are, the work of blood was never done with the infernal thoroughness of papal Rome. Heathenism had a conscience. . . ."† Any conscience that Rome ever had was seared as with a hot iron. *Rome taught the secular courts the use of torture.*

The tremendous power of the Roman Church

* Professor Foakes Jackson in *Outline of Christianity*, II, 171.
† Professor Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 210.

is mainly the result of its claim to guarantee salvation by obedience to its observances; and that it alone can defy hell. This claim made it essential that there should not be the remotest chance of any mistake on the part of the Church; hence the further claim of infallibility had to be made. This claim, when challenged, is only made on behalf of the pope, and it has been found necessary to hedge it round with numerous qualifications. Dr. Salmon has exposed all this prevarication.* He has shown that the pope "is not an infallible guide if by his public utterances he leads Christian people wrong," and that "it is beyond controversy that cases have occurred when Christian people would have gone wrong if they had followed the guidance of the bishop of Rome."†

3. *The Renaissance and the Reformation.*—The decline of the Western Roman Empire had been the beginning of a long intellectual sleep from which Western Civilisation did not awaken until the Renaissance. One of the causes of this decadence was that the Early Church despised "carnal" learning, as Basil, (c. A.D. 350) showed when he said: "Of what importance is it to know whether the earth is a sphere . . .? What is of importance is to know how I should conduct myself towards myself, towards my fellow-men and towards God." It was a question of values, and Christians chose

* See *The Infallible Church:* George Salmon, D.D., Provost, T.C.D.
† *Ibid.*, 436.

the better part of high moral living at the expense of all other culture. We may regret that everything but theology was lost for so long; yet the sacred and the secular do not always run well in harness together. When the revival came, it was not at first a spiritual, but an intellectual renaissance and one of general culture; though the Reformation, which followed, was part of the great awakening.

Under the mediæval theocracy the world was supposed to be flat, with Jerusalem in the centre, hell underneath and heaven above. Ptolemy's geography and geodesy were discovered by Western Europe at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the world was found to be a sphere.* The age of the Navigators, however, extended human horizons so rapidly that geographical discovery outran theory and "the rush of new facts made Ptolemy practically obsolete in a generation."†

After a hiatus of fourteen centuries man went forth once more to conquer nature. The magnetic compass and the astrolabe made deep-sea navigation possible, if not at first very accurate. Prince Henry of Portugal's seamen traced out the whole west coast of Africa, until Diaz in 1486 reached Mossel Bay, now in Cape Colony, and da Gama beat this record by sailing on to India. Columbus discovered the West Indies in 1492 and South America six years later. Cabot reached Newfoundland and Labrador in 1497. "But not until the

* See Nansen: *In Northern Mists*, II, 292.

† Dr. H. R. Mill in *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Geography."

voyage of Magellan (1520) shook the scales from the eyes of Europe did modern geography begin to advance."*

Thus the Oceanic Era dawned upon the world, as the aerial era of progress has begun in our own day. New worlds, geographical and intellectual, redressed the debit balance of the old and weary world that lay around the Mediterranean. Only one other essential was wanting to complete the emancipation and make sure the further progress of mankind. This was deliverance from the thraldom of the Roman Church, given to the leading nations by the Reformation.

The revival of classical learning had been a revolt against the despotism of theology; but it was natural science that was destined to become the main basis of human knowledge. Bacon was soon to reverse Aristotle's deductive philosophy and to be followed in due course by Newton and Einstein. All this was secular, and of itself could promote only materialism. The new birth of learning did not turn the thoughts of men back to the Saviour.

Lord Acton, himself a Romanist, began his famous lecture on Luther as follows: "During the latter part of the Middle Ages, the desire for reform of the Church was constant. It was strongest and most apparent among laymen, for a famous monastic writer of the fourteenth century testified that the laity led better lives than the clergy. To the bulk

* Dr. H. R. Mill in *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Geography."

of ordinary Christians reform meant morality in the priesthood. It became intolerable to them to see the Sacrament administered habitually by sacrilegious hands, or to let their daughters go to confession to an unclean priest. The discontent was deepest where men were best. They felt that the organisation provided for the salvation of men's souls was serving for their destruction, and that the more people sought the means of grace provided, the greater risk they incurred of imbibing corruption."*

John Wycliffe was the first prominent sign of the spiritual awakening in England. He was Master of Balliol College in 1361 and known as the greatest logician of his day. He objected to the papacy, relying mostly "upon Scripture and the early Fathers against the whole tradition of the Mediæval Church." He was tried for heresy, and saved once by John of Gaunt and a second time by a London mob. "Wycliffe was a Protestant pure and simple," two hundred years before the Reformation. His main contentions were that the pope was "a totally unnecessary person," as Christ is the Head of the Church; that "Holy Scripture is the sole rule of life"; and that "ceremonial is nothing, and is rather a hindrance than a help in man's personal relation to God, which is not bettered by the intervention of any priest."†

Martin Luther, in spite of his faults, should

* *Lectures on Modern History*, 90.

† *An Introductory History of England*, C. R. Fletcher, Fellow of Magdalen, 300-301.

ever receive the credit for reviving the personal knowledge of God when it seemed completely submerged. When St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans had brought the light of the Gospel to his soul, as it has to many people unknown to history, the Reformation may be said to have begun. It stood "for a largely new as well as a positive and liberating apprehension of the astounding miracle of the free grace of God in redemption."* R. H. Hutton has shown, briefly and forcefully, the original power of Protestantism.†

When "the tumult and the shouting" died it was seen that one and only one irreconcilable difference, the right of private judgment, existed between the Reformers and the Romanists. "Is the Bible to be interpreted by the individual . . . or by the Church?"‡ The importance of private judgment depends upon whether each individual is personally responsible to God for his or her life. The essence of Protestantism is that no one can shelve this responsibility by deputing a priest or other human mediator to act for him. The Romanist position, as Henry Drummond pointed out, makes every soul a parasite. Augustine had maintained the personal responsibility of the individual to God; while the claims of the ecclesiastical institution have depended upon its existence being essential, as a mediator, to salvation.

* Archdeacon Rawlinson: *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 94.

† Theological Essays, "Romanism," etc.

‡ Dr. Coulton in *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Reformation."

Dr. Coulton has reduced the issue to a nutshell by saying that agreement "between authority and private judgment seems impossible."*

The Reformation gave us, though tardily in England, complete toleration, with all our social and individual liberty of speech and action, of conscience and worship. Our Reformation being originally political, and its main effect Erastian, its religious results at first were feeble. We had no great leader such as Luther or Calvin. "The history of the Reformation in England is a tangled and unsatisfactory affair."†

The Church of England had been the National Church from about the sixth century, and in communion with Rome until the breach with Henry VIII. Our Reformation was truly most moderate, except perhaps under Edward VI. We got, in fact, less religious reform than is generally supposed; for the movement was engineered by the State, and only a minimum of changes was made. Thus the mediæval institution passed through the years of stress almost intact.

It is well known that the Royal title "Defender of the Faith," which still ornaments our coins, was bestowed on Henry VIII by Leo X for defending the pope against Luther; though the king soon turned against the papacy and made himself supreme in Church and State. The Church of England gained no liberty by this change, for Henry was a

* Dr. Coulton in *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Reformation."
† Rawlinson: *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 27.

despot, and permitted no essential deviation "from the religion of Catholic Europe."*

The first Book of Common Prayer was introduced under the 1549 Act of Uniformity, during the reign of Edward VI and the Protectorate of Somerset. After Somerset's fall "altars were destroyed and tables substituted";† a more Protestant Prayer Book was also introduced. When Mary died, Elizabeth's Act of Supremacy restored the Royal authority of Henry VIII in a modified and more constitutional form. The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and a revised edition of the first Prayer Book were enforced. The Puritans rebelled against the State Religion and Nonconformity began.

Elizabeth, in practice, was an autocrat, though her principles largely consisted in expediency and compromise. She made some attempt to return to primitive Church customs;‡ but the objection was that the State settled everyone's religion. The main principle of mediæval institutionalism, theocratic authority, was as strong as ever; and private judgment was still forbidden, as it was for the most part until after the Revolution of 1689. England lost many of the benefits of the Reformation. Dr. Overton wrote: "The shape that the Church of England ultimately took was modelled on the Renaissance rather than on the Reformation proper."§

The mediæval tradition, on the whole, was

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "England, Church of."
† *Ibid.*
‡ *Outline of Christianity*, III, 61.
§ *The Church in England*, I, 350.

maintained in the religious services, and we got little reform beyond throwing over the pope. The little we did get was valuable, for the Prayer Book was compiled in English and we were given our English Bible; but the Reformation Settlement was a compromise from which we are suffering now.

Queen Elizabeth set her mark on the Church of England, but it was not altogether a Christian mark. "She looked at theological differences in a purely political light . . . The first interest in her own mind was the interest of public order,"* and to this end she effected a compromise, or what she intended to be a compromise, between Protestants and Catholics. Expediency was the policy, and institutionalism remained unimpaired. The Prayer Book was enforced "on the clergy on pain of deprivation." Elizabeth was an autocratic head of the English Church.

4. *England After the Reformation.*—The law given by Moses was replaced by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ until the Latin Church turned back to the "beggarly elements" of Hebrew legalism and added the legalism of Rome as well as Greek ritual. The Reformation did something towards reinstating the Christian principle of grace, but not very much in England.

Archdeacon Cunningham taught us at Cambridge that the basis of Anglicanism at the Reformation was two-fold: the Church and the Bible, of which

* Green's *Short History*, Chap. VII.

ecclesiastical tradition was the stronger influence within our church. It was claimed, indeed, that the historic tradition was maintained by the Church of England unless that tradition was unscriptural; and the Bible was used only as a negative test, so that if nothing could be found in it against a practice that practice was retained. The observance of Christmas Day was given as an example of this.

Such an arrangement does not now appear to have been very satisfactory from the Christian standpoint, but it shows how little was changed. Romanists and Puritans regarded the Reformation Settlement as an illogical compromise. They would naturally so regard it, though not without reason.

The Romanists are mentioned elsewhere. The Puritans or Nonconformists took their stand on their interpretation of the Bible and refused to admit any other authority, hence the quarrel between them and the State with its Church. It would appear now that, even from the standpoint of expediency, the Church of England " backed the wrong horse "; for it has gained no permanent advantage from its support of absolutism.

The strength of English Protestantism, both of the Church and Nation, was seen when James II attempted to restore Romanism, and the " silk-stockinged " Revolution of 1688–1689 was the result. The basis of the monarchy then became parliamentary instead of " divine," and all future sovereigns were required to be members of the Anglican communion. The subjection of the Church

of England to the State was seen in the suspension of Convocation, for party reasons, in 1717. The Church was thus muzzled for 135 years.

Again, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion retained the form of sound words, but the Institution has been, in recent years at least, against the practical application of them; for the mediæval tradition of corporate spiritual responsibility (our old friend the herd instinct in a new dress) was not interfered with. This was, and yet is, a crucial point. Individual responsibility contradicts the corporate or institutional form of Christianity that has come down to us. Some of the worst abuses of power on the part of Romanism were filtered out at the Reformation. Most of them " were logical, natural and unavoidable results of a fundamentally false conception of the knowledge of God ";* and this false conception was not altogether eliminated.

The English ecclesiastical system has much to its credit, but it has resembled, until recently, its Roman precursor in its call for the abnegation of personal responsibility in the Christian sense. The system was settled upon a comprehensive basis, between Geneva and Rome, but within its limits it was fixed. Public worship was stereotyped by law until after the Puritan revolt and is still theoretically rigid for Anglicans.

The Church of England was autocratically powerful, for it had the government behind it; but its uniformity is now admitted to have been a

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 2.

mistake,* and difficulties arose over the Puritans. They wanted religious liberty and were prepared to die for it. Their persecutions we should now like to forget. They found freedom to worship God, according to conscience and their reading of the Bible, in America before it was granted here.

"The genius of Anglicanism may perhaps still be best understood by regarding its origin as a *carefully limited and qualified* reaction against the ecclesiastical institutionalism which the later Middle Ages pushed to excess. . . . It has constantly sought to retain the proved spiritual value both of the sacramental system and of the authoritative teaching of the historic faith."†

This statement shows how little reform we got; though it is the verdict of only one of the three schools of thought that the Church of England comprehends, and Anglicanism now includes many who may view the subject differently. In addition to the definitely Evangelical, Liberal or Modernist, and Anglo-Catholic sects, there are many non-party members of the Church of England (among whom the present writer would include himself) who have, however, leanings in one or more of these directions. Some say that the main result of the Reformation in England was the transference of authority from the Church to the Bible; but while this may have some truth on paper it has been, recently at least, a dead letter in practice. "With the partial exception

* Dr. Dearmer, in *Outline of Christanity*, III, 58.
† *Ibid.*, 71-72 (our italics).

of Sweden, England was the only country in which the Reformation did not involve an almost complete breach with the system of the mediæval Church. The main lines of the existing ecclesiastical systems are mediæval." *

The mediæval institution passed through the Reformation with only minor changes. It never for one moment, while these changes were being made, ceased to function. Every diocese throughout England carried on its ecclesiastical business whatever was going on at the same time in London. This aspect of the Reformation has been largely overlooked, with the result that we are surprised to find how far behind the times, in many ways, our religious institutions are to-day. They are still bound by mediæval tradition in spite of the heroic efforts of some of their members to make them more up-to-date.

"Clearly the Reformation had not gone far enough. But this does not mean that all would have been well if a few more ceremonies had been abolished. We must look through forms of worship and forms of government to the conception of revelation behind them; and this we shall find more Latin than is commonly supposed. One of the great difficulties in the study of history is to remember its continuity. . . . Great as the change was, we fancy it even greater than it was, and underestimate the continuity of thought between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries." †

* The Bishop of Durham, in *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Church and State."

† Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 236.

CHAPTER V

MODERN ENGLAND

"*The natural man . . . bids the prophets prophesy smooth things, and expects the priests to soothe his conscience with stately rituals and all the husks of outward worship.*"
PROFESSOR GWATKIN: "THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD."

1. RECENT EVENTS: THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL AND THE OXFORD MOVEMENT. 2. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SAME. 3. PUBLIC MORALITY. 4. SUMMARY, AND BRIEF SURVEY OF THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND.

1. AN ANGLICAN historian has truly said that the changes effected by the English Reformation "were not so much desired *by* the Church, as determined *for* the Church by the policy of the civil government and the personal predilections of successive sovereigns."* This we may have seen already, but it is the main clue to the understanding of our Reformation, and we cannot see it too clearly.

Its importance appears to reside in the fact that two streams of thought may be traced from the Reformation to our own day; they were not entirely separate in practice, but they are clear enough

* Archdeacon Rawlinson in *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 32.

intellectually. That these streams had their sources much farther back in history does not now concern us. The *official* course was a continuation of the mediæval Græco-Roman religion in a modified form, and was dictated by the State. An *unofficial* stream also flowed, partly within and partly without the official channel; this was the genius of Christianity which the Spirit of God constantly strove to restore by the agency of individuals.

Dr. Rawlinson quotes Professor Brilioth to the effect that the Anglican type of Protestantism, which is described as lacking " positive warmth and enthusiasm," was " thin and negative " compared with the continental type. The Lutheran Church, for example, had enjoyed " a positively new illumination, a rediscovery of the Gospel, as a free liberating message of divine grace and power, a transforming word of good news."* This came to us later with the first of our two recent renewals of religion: the Evangelical Revival and the Oxford Movement.

The former of these startled the languid latitudinarians of the eighteenth century. Its name, though correct, has given rise to mistaken ideas of John Wesley, who was not originally a low churchman. He was a Fellow of Lincoln College and was noted for the strictness of his churchmanship. He was practically if not theoretically a high churchman; but he was, like so many religious people, only a professing Christian until, in 1738,

* *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 35.

"he passed through the spiritual experience" called "the new birth." "Wesley felt, as he expresses it . . . I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and that an assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sins."* This was his conversion, and it resembled that of St. Paul in revolutionising a life devoted to religious exercises.

Consecrating himself to God for the preaching of the Gospel, Wesley went forth throughout the land, and "the effect of his preaching was extraordinary. . . . Thousands were converted . . . chiefly among the lower classes,"† and the formation of the Methodist Society was the result. The breach with the Church of England came with Wesley's death; but he had revived personal religion, and there are now about twelve million Methodists in the world and three or four million Anglicans.

A further result of Wesley's work was the rise of the Evangelical Party within the Church of England. This party is best known by its foundation of the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society, the last two in conjunction with the Free Churches. The abolition of the black slave trade and the origin of Sunday Schools are also attributed, in part at least, to the evangelicals. "For the first half of the nineteenth century Evangelicalism was the strongest power in the Church of England. The most influential and the most popular of the clergy

* Wakeman's *History of the Church of England*, 438-439.
† *Ibid.*

were permeated by its spirit even if they did not definitely range themselves under its banners."* Its outstanding feature was the voluntary conversion of the individual by a conscious act of faith in Christ as Saviour. This is "the Central Gospel of Christianity."† At the present time it is well for these facts to be fully authenticated. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says of the Evangelicals: "Their influence for good was extensive, they laid stress on the importance of conscious conversion, giving prominence to the necessity of personal salvation . . ."‡

The Evangelicals henceforward became one of the three great schools of thought within the Anglican communion; and true to their type they did not greatly concern themselves with institutional matters. There was need, however, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for many reforms within the English Church; and the Liberal or Board Church men were the first (1825–1833) to recognise this. The group did not form, at this time, a definite party, though they would be classed as one of the three schools just referred to. Most of them were Oxford, and indeed Oriel, men. Archbishop Whately, Thomas Arnold of Rugby, and Dean Milman are now the best known of them. They caused no little fluttering in the dovecote; and the Church of England, though for other reasons

* Wakeman's *History of the Church of England*, 455.

† Archdeacon Rawlinson's *The Church of England and the Church of Christ.*

‡ Article, "England, Church of."

more particularly, became unpopular for some years.

The Oxford Movement was intimately connected with the third great school of Anglican theologians and led to the formation of the Anglo-Catholic Party. Newman said the Movement began with Keble's assize sermon on National Apostasy in 1833. In 1841 "Oxford was up in arms" against Newman's Tract No. 90 and Keble resigned his professorship. The Oxford Movement had begun. In 1843 "Dr. Pusey was forbidden to preach in the university pulpit for two years"; and by that time the movement "really was drifting towards Rome,"* for the first group crossed the ecclesiastical rubicon, to be followed shortly after by a fresh migration which included Manning.

The Oxford Movement brought public worship to the front. The Anglican services had been "negligently performed"; but the main purpose of this great movement was a revival of the old Catholic tradition. This did not mean, at that time, merely Græco-Roman Institutionalism; it was an attempt to return to the tenets of the undivided church of the first six centuries. There would be more agreement with them if they could return to the condition of the unpaganised church before Cyprian. Acute controversy, and even riots, were caused over the new ritual; though the early tractarians considered themselves anti-Roman. The innovations were, of course, extremely old, if not

* Canon Overton, *The Church in England*, II, 337, 339, 340.

entirely Christian in origin. Our ecclesiastical courts became very busy with the strife thus caused, which went on year after year. Archbishop Tait "could not understand men attaching such importance to what he would regard as unessential trifles."*

In 1850 the Privy Council decided the Gorham Case against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. This seems to have sent many ritualists to Rome, according to Dr. Dearmer, who adds that their secession intensified the suspicion that the Oxford Movement was leading to Romanism.† However that may have been, the omens evidently were favourable for a Roman Catholic Hierarchy to be set up in England. This was done in 1851, the year of the religious census, and a noted year in other ways.

The following year Convocation was restored, after a suspension of 135 years. The sacerdotalists were encouraged by a legal decision in 1857, and "an increase in ritual usages, such as eucharistic vestments, altar lights and incense, followed. In 1860 the English Church Union was formed mainly to uphold high church doctrine and ritual . . . and in 1865 the Church Association, mainly to put down such doctrine and ritual."‡ The first of a series of Royal Commissions on the illegalities was appointed in 1867. All these commissions made recommendations against the innovations, but the body ecclesiastic was never purged.

* Canon Overton: *The Church in England*, II, 377.
† *Outline of Christianity*, III, 173,
‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica*: Article, "England, Church of."

These illegalities of the high church clergy not only continued but increased until 1874, when the Archbishop of Canterbury introduced his Public Worship Regulation Bill, " to give increased facilities for proceeding against clergy who introduced illegal ritual."* The Bill was popular in the country and readily passed both Houses of Parliament, but it had no effect on the evil it was intended to eradicate. " Advanced and illegal usages became more frequent."†

As to the country in general, the latter part of the Nineteenth Century was mainly occupied with industrial and labour matters. Unemployment arose, with its consequent distress; the franchise was extended, and education Acts were passed. The Labour Party was formed, with Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald as its first secretary; and its energy was diverted from socialistic idealism to constitutional methods of reform.

The tendency of legislation during the last hundred years has been progressively humanitarian rather than truly ethical. In economic conditions, there has been a great change from the demand exceeding the supply of our manufactures to the supply having insufficient demand. Yet this change has been accompanied by an increase, instead of a decrease, in government expenditure and even extravagance, until taxation has now become the most serious hindrance to the recovery of trade. We cannot carry

* *The Church in England*, II, 377-378.
† *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, " England, Church of."

our present population in these little islands, and vast spaces of our empire are undeveloped for want of man-power. We are very badly governed.

The controversy between science and religion, precipitated by Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, lasted until the Great War caused an armistice. Since 1918, apart from the Fundamentalists, there has been no general resumption of this conflict. Each side now views the problem in a new light, and neither claims a victory. The popular conception is very different from this, for most people learn little by reading except from their newspapers. The periodical Press inculcates a certain respect for religion, but this is becoming the kind of respect shown for ancient monuments. Few journalists can be expected to distinguish between facts and theories. The result appears to be that, in the popular mind, science has out-manœuvred the Bible and left it marooned.

Biblical criticism has invaded the Anglo-Catholic movement in recent years; but unfortunately it is a historical fact that, in or about the year 1896, "there was the most lamentable and flagrant disorder within the Church, though it was then as nothing to what it has since become."* In 1899 the ceremonial use of incense and processional lights were condemned by the archbishops. In 1900, only thirty years ago, the Reservation of the Sacrament was also condemned. Six years later a Royal Commission on ecclesiastical discipline

* *Encylopædia Britannica:* Article, "England, Church of."

reported that the usage of the Church of England had been departed from by " the interpolation into the Communion Office of prayers from the Roman Mass, the practice of Reservation, of the Mass of the Pre-sanctified, of Corpus Christi processions, of the invocation of the Virgin Mary and of Saints, and the observance of such Roman festivals as those of the Assumption and of the Sacred Heart." These practices were bluntly declared to be " inconsistent with and subversive of the teaching of the Church of England." They suggested doctrines repudiated by the Church of England and " should promptly be made to cease."* Vain hope!

" There is a large and influential propaganda which is definitely Roman in spirit and outlook . . . in its forms and modes of worship. It is denied that the Church of England, apart from Rome, has any authority. . . . There is a pathetic longing for recognition by Rome. . . . It is claimed that there is no important difference between the Anglican Eucharist and the Roman Mass. . . . Some three thousand Anglican clergymen . . . hold that by consecration the bread and wine are changed and become the true Body and Blood of Christ, and . . . that Christ, thus present, is to be adored. . . . There are many churches in England to-day in which the whole Roman system is inculcated, except the doctrine of Papal Infallibility."†

Father Stebbing says that the Oxford Movement

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, " England, Church of."
† *Ibid.*

has proved itself " a powerful help " in providing leaders for the Roman Church, and that " a stream of converts " has since flowed, without intermission, from the Church of England. The number of converts to Rome in England is now said to be 12,000 a year.*

2. *Some Reflections on the Foregoing.*—When W. E. H. Lecky wrote, in 1865, on " the progress of a rationalistic civilisation, " it appeared, at least to him, that rationalism or rationality had become the paramount influence in human advancement. Even when allowance is made for Lecky's idealisation of reason, it remains true that (we are forced to say) among Protestants, it had apparently demolished superstition; it was rapidly destroying ignorance; and the outstanding feature of Western Civilisation seemed to be the domination of intellect.

Elements, however, had already entered that were destined to upset these calculations and to cause a serious reversion towards irrationalism. Professed Rationalists must find it difficult to contend that pure reason is now triumphant. It has certainly advanced since Lecky's day, but it has not occupied the whole field. Other principles, inconsistent with reason, have arisen and developed menacingly.

In one direction the pendulum may now be said to have swung back some little distance towards the darkness of past ages. There has been a new outburst of superstition that Lecky would have

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, " Roman Catholic Church."

thought incredible in the heart of civilisation. Witches, no longer liable to be burnt or even ducked, have emerged from their holes and corners. Cults, that were completely discredited two or three generations ago, are now alive and gaining civilised adherents. Idolatry has returned to so-called Protestant Churches. The horrid heads of ancient mysteries are reappearing among us. Ecclesiastical miracles are once more asserted with confidence, and what seems quite preposterous in our time, are believed by many. "The last century has seen a luxuriant growth of fantastic worships, unedifying miracles and hysterical revelations, diligently encouraged by the authorities of the Church" of Rome.*

This recent revival of superstition may not yet have reached alarming proportions; but that any such revival should have been as much as possible, at a time when the reign of reason was thought, by a great philosophical historian, to have begun, shows that its sovereignty, like that of the world's remaining monarchs, is strictly limited, and that insurrections are liable to break out.

The great masses of mankind, in spite of the benefits of modern education, are still in a dangerous condition. Their emotions far outweigh their knowledge, and may dominate their reason and self-control at any time. Charlatanry, if sufficiently specious and impressive, might conceivably carry them back on a wave of imposture to deeds as dark as any on record. The possibility of this is proved

* Gwatkin: *Knowledge of God*, II, 216-217.

by the fact, and the horrors, of the great European War; though of this we would not speak.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* deals quite frankly with the present state of Christianity in England. After referring to the defeat of the new Prayer Book in the House of Commons, it continues, "There was no question that the vote was popular in the country. The speeches showed that there was the strongest feeling against the Book, and, in particular, against Reservation and the proposed extension of episcopal power. The Bishops had claimed that there was no departure from the Reformation Settlement, and that the Book would make for the restoration of order. The House of Commons believed the reverse . . . The Prayer Book was regarded as a surrender, legalising the illegalities of lawbreakers."*

Another writer says: "The rejection by the House of Commons of a proposed new Prayer Book . . . was chiefly remarkable for the quite unexpected public interest aroused in matters of doctrine and religion. But it was an interest which showed that religious controversy must still turn on very deep-seated historical prejudices."†

In the former of these articles it is pointed out (after dealing with the second defeat of this book) that the support of the Church of England was obtained from "a majority of the synods, but *a minority of their members*" (our italics). Then

* Article, "England, Church of."
† *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "English History."

occurs this striking passage: "The dominant impression gained from a survey of the history of the Church of England during the last forty years is one of an immense development of organisational activity, to which there has been no corresponding extension of spiritual influence. . . . The Established Church . . . is becoming more and more a training ground of future converts to Rome; and while this and the dearth in quantity and quality of ordination candidates continues, the enormous and sometimes hasty activities of the Church Assembly cannot wisely be regarded as evidence of abundant life."*

3. *The Relationship of the Subject to Public Morality.*—We must now ask if the decline in the Christian institutions has had any effect on public morals, and if so, in what direction.

It is difficult to assess with any precision the general moral tone of a large community; and any attempt to do so is in danger of ending in a verdict according to the personal bias of the assessor. It is hoped that this bias will not unduly obtrude itself here.

On the one hand we see with gratification that some of the Christian virtues, such as kindness, are practised to-day as never before. On the other hand, the country as a whole seems no less materialistic; its main trend is towards the making and spending of money. People who are merely kindly, and without worldly wisdom, are constantly imposed upon. There are so many impostors

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "England, Church of."

among us that we are forced to harden our hearts in sheer self-defence.

There may be nothing new in this; but the increase in kindliness and brotherhood is a modern improvement. Our fathers were sterner than ourselves. Can we claim any moral superiority over them?

This may be decided, in part at least, by glancing at the trend of recent legislation, and especially at the existing social services. The first thought, on considering these, is that a deterioration of moral character is already resulting from them. If such a decline were not yet within view, it must follow the wholesale creation of State pensioners. This evil effect was not foreseen by those who first took the part of the economically weak against the strong.

While a minority of people were found to be just, kind, and even considerate to their dependants, the majority were, as they may be yet, selfish and hard-hearted in their dealings with others. An ethical method of dealing with them would have been to encourage the kindly and penalise the rest; but very few of our legislators have shown, in recent years, much acquaintance with ethics as a basis for legal enactments. The State has entered, with little knowledge of the subject, into the social and economic relationships of men and the result is unsatisfactory.

Kindness to the " under dogs " of society was the original intention; but through ignorance, cupidity, or both, we are now faced with a national deterioration of character.

The underlying ideal of modern legislation, as far as it can be said to have any ideal, is to put into practice certain alleged Christian principles; that is, principles believed by the reformers, philanthropists and legislators, to be Christian, and hence the best for the people. Unfortunately these well-meaning men and women have been ill-instructed. They thought they could pick out from the Gospels what they regarded as the plums, and bestow them upon a grateful populace. They have no conception, apparently, that the Sermon on the Mount is useless without the Atonement, and that an emasculated Christianity is no basis for statecraft.

More harm than good has been done by this muddling. Millions of little-educated people are being spoon-fed and their ability to fight the battle of life is taken away. The State, which may have some claim to training them in social ethics, deprives them of ability to keep themselves. Their moral character is spoilt, and they become avaricious instead of thankful.

Any estimate of our present moral condition can only be relative and will depend upon the period with which we compare ourselves. If we take the eighteenth century, we may pride ourselves on a great reduction in brutality and drunkenness, in spite of our "intemperance" advocates; and if we go further back, the public conscience of to-day appears in a yet more favourable light.

The political factor has played its part. Millions now take enough interest in public affairs to

register their vote, whereas only as many thousands had the franchise in the early part of the nineteenth century. More or less Christian principles and self-interest, though an incongruous mixture, may have been the chief incentives towards whatever political progress has been made; while even elementary education has raised the status of the masses appreciably.

There has been improvement in other directions, such as in honesty, since Victorian times. In place of the hypocrisy, some of which, it must be admitted, helped to make the wheels of life run smoothly, we have now a frankness that is often brutal. In yet other directions we are no better than our fathers; for even if the divorce courts are not accepted as good evidence of moral decline, the present white slave traffic is far worse for our women than was the black traffic in African slaves. There is a terrible amount of evil among us, and much of it is of recent growth; but it is difficult to trace any connection between it and the decline in Church membership. Lapsed worshippers do not yet form a large proportion of the criminal class.

Can we not say that there was approximately as much evil, *mutatis mutandis*, when nearly everyone went to church as there is now when nearly everyone stays away? It seems impossible to prove that the decline in the Christian institutions has resulted, up to the present, in any widespread moral deterioration; this may come later, or it may not. We must notice, however, that the decline has been contem-

porary with Social legislation which is beginning to undermine the character of large numbers, especially of young people. It may be held by some that the growing irreligion is an effect of lower moral character; and this seems possible, even though public morality in other directions has improved. If we attempt to sum up these considerations we may see that no *very pronounced* improvement is discernible in the morality of the public as a whole; but despite the increase in e.g. adultery, the ethical standard of the nation is higher, and its ideals are much higher than they were a hundred years ago.

Any general drift away from Christian principles must be regarded with apprehension, for even Rationalists have admitted Christianity to be the best influence in the world. As we cannot trace any definite downward drift, it is possible that the decline of the Churches indicates a revulsion from ecclesiasticism, or from institutional, as distinguished from individual and social, Christianity. This is the view of many, including Sir Oliver Lodge.*

While this may be conceded of Protestantism, the increase of Romanism appears against it. This is more in appearance than reality, and there is an element of uncertainty in the Roman Catholic statistics. Romanists renounce their liberty as the price of a guaranteed salvation. Such an arrangement appeals to a large, and perhaps an increasing, number of people; but it is antagonistic to the spirit

* See *Man and the Universe*, 84.

of true progress. Everyone now has freedom of choice, though some choose to mortgage their liberty for an institutional promise of heaven. We are here treating the English as free people, able to dispose of themselves at will. This is the Protestant position, and true of the English nation as a whole.

The Church of Rome may be advancing among us because, like the Pharisees, it compasseth sea and land to make one proselyte; also because, of all its realms, England is the dearest, and its reconquest most desired. It matters not how many of its members are the lowest of mankind, such as those who trouble Glasgow. Numbers alone will tell, and Rome may get them; there seems nothing to stop her. Liberty cannot compete with the most efficient institutional machine in the world, except in quality; and quality, in democratic countries, is submerged.

The Dean of St. Paul's has recently given us a timely reminder that Romanism is not so much a Church as a State. Anglo-Catholicism looks to Romanism as the "real thing," and the origin of this ecclesiastical ideal must be sought far back in Rome Pagan. The magnificent worldly traditions of the Empire, with its fine sense of order and discipline, have been worthily upheld by its successor. Lord Bryce said: "The Church was compelled to frame herself upon the model of the secular administration. . . . She strove . . . to reproduce for herself the imperial system."* This political

* *The Holy Roman Empire*, 11.

system, by the second century of our era, had become a despotism. The Church not only attempted to copy this, she was welded to the empire, and absorbed its legal and military principles, in spite of their being anti-Christian. The kingdom of this world, which our Lord refused as a temptation of the devil, the ecclesiastical institution pressed forward to accept. Christ had substituted love for law and peace for militarism. The Latin Church reversed all this. Even the deification of the popes is a copy of that of the emperors, though neither emperors nor popes made, as Gwatkin said, very satisfactory gods. Romanism is pagan (i.e. Græco-Roman) throughout, despite its ability to talk in any language, metaphorically speaking, that will win a convert. Being a low form of religion it is easy for its members and hence popular; whereas Christianity is spiritual and difficult for the natural man.

The separation of Apostolic Christianity from paganism was real; there was profound enmity between them. Christianity was good and polytheism evil. The Church, however, did not keep itself pure. The evil principles of paganism were introduced. At length, after centuries of mixing, the amalgam of inconsistent elements has come down to us, and Christians are expected by the institutions to welcome it!

The original witness for God, and the protest against evil were lost. These might, conceivably, have been restored at the Reformation, and a noble

attempt was then made to restore first principles, but its success was far from complete. The life of the Christian, and of any institution that wishes to stand for Christ, must be a protest against evil.

4. *Summary, and Brief Survey of the Present State of Religion.*—Having now reached our own time, let us take a backward glance along the road over which we have travelled; we may thus see more clearly, before proceeding further on our way, where the Christian Institution went wrong.

Our Lord was God's Revelation to man, and the apostles spoke in His Name. Those who understood and received the Divine Word were custodians of its truth, and many were propagandists of its message. The gist of it was reduced to writing; and this record was witnessed by the Church until its paganisation, and by individual Christians at all times. Then the Christian Institution became metamorphosed. True Christianity was submerged by what we may term the pagan principle. "While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry . . ."* God's Truth was resuscitated at the Reformation, for "Protestantism in its primary principle is the return to primitive Christianity. The whole development . . . culminating in the ecclesiastical-doctrinal system of the Roman Church is regarded as a corruption, since foreign and even heathen elements

* St. Matthew, xxv, 5, 6.

have been brought in, so that the religion established by Christ is obscured or lost."*

It was said that the Great War exposed the bankruptcy of Christianity. This charge was based upon the common fallacy that the Churches were entirely Christian, and that the kingdoms of this world should have already become the kingdom of God. The reply to the charge is that *Institutional Christianity* has failed, but that this is not true Christianity, which has never yet been tried on a national, much less on an international, scale.

The Church of England could not make any definite protest against evil at the Reformation because its hands were tied, willingly or unwillingly, by the State. Had it been able to make such a protest it would have been not only purer but more popular, and hence more truly a national Church. It was moderate, reasonable and scholarly; "but it failed . . . either to retain the allegiance of the whole nation, or to make itself fully understood. The Church was moderately Protestant. The nation, taken as a whole, was more Protestant still."†

Thus a golden opportunity was lost of leading the nation firmly along a higher path; and the Church's policy of compromise has further divided it. True to its tradition, the Church of England to-day is still moderate and scholarly; but the best of its scholarship

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Christianity."

† Archdeacon Rawlinson: *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 45.

in all its schools is heading towards Modernism and this, whatever its effect on Christianity, cannot help a moderate Church which depends upon the balance of its constituent parts. The great difficulty of Anglicanism is that while *nominally* Protestant it is now, in fact, *predominantly* Catholic. On the one side of it is the Church of Rome, and on the other side are the Free Churches.

Romanism had, until the Reformation, and yet has in a measure, the inestimable natural advantage that, as the successor of the pagan empire, it inherited the tradition of universality and eternity. The empire was never, even approximately, universal; but the sway of the Cæsars was continental in its scope, and lasted for so many centuries that, around the Mediterranean, and even farther afield, Rome seemed part of the order of nature. The subjective idea that Rome could not die became, for hundreds of years, an objective reality. The Church " hitched its wagon to a star." It has made good use of its opportunities in England and profited by its political emancipation in the nineteenth century, so that it now appears to be the most vigorous Church in our midst.

The Free Churches may not be as political as they were a few years ago, but they, like the National Church, seem to be fighting a losing battle. This is remarkable because Nonconformity is more democratic than Anglicanism, and the political trend is strongly in the democratic direction. Against this is the undoubted decay of Puritanism, as a

social force. Nobody loves it now; and probably its work is done. The real Puritanism that won, for all the English, liberty of speech and worship has now degenerated to the dregs of "Dora." Many have suffered from its narrow outlook upon life, and the spirit of the age is as much against it as against traditionalism. Yet in scholarship the Free Churches are second to no Church in the world. Some of the smaller Nonconformist bodies have decreased very considerably; the Society of Friends, for example, said to number 60,000 in 1691, is now reduced, in Great Britain, to 20,000 members.*

Our thoughtful people at the present time, may be asking more questions than can be answered immediately; but this is a sign of immaturity rather than of decadence. That the state of mind through which many are now passing has its dangers few will deny. That this is better than indifference is also true. There is, unfortunately, more indifference among the people as a whole than inquiry; most of them seem to live for amusement, whatever that may be, and have little interest in higher things. Students should remember, however, that this is perfectly natural and may never change.

Of the three main schools of thought, Modernism is now the strongest, and may save us from idolatry and superstition; Evangelicalism was betrayed over the Reservation of the Sacrament and has not recovered; Anglo-Catholicism is as militant as ever.

* *Outline of Christianity*, III, 280.

A large section of each of the last two schools is adopting a *non possumus* attitude towards intellectual difficulties; hence the growth of so-called "Modernists," who are also sub-divided into relatively orthodox and progressive classes. As only about ten per cent of the population is embraced by all three schools, the future of Christianity in England is at present "anybody's game." The transfer of emphasis from dogmatic theology to practical morality is one modern improvement that seems likely to stay. In this the Christian salt has done its work well, though it is not rightly a matter of indifference what one believes.

Religious interest is dormant or non-existent in ninety per cent of our people; yet any act of religious tyranny might, if it had a good Press, rouse nearly the whole country. Thus all are for toleration, and religious affairs are not taken very seriously, except by a fraction of the public. There is more actual Christianity than would be assumed from outward observances; but little zeal for God is seen, for religious enthusiasm is bad form. It outrages social conventions. The Kingdom of God is not yet universal.

Most thoughtful people of the younger generation find the older type of Christian Minister too boring for words. Hence it is important just now that the wheat of true Christianity should be separated from Græco-Roman chaff. The scientific approach to the faith seems the most promising for the immediate future, among the educated of all

social classes, but unfortunately science is the one subject above all others that most clergy know least about, and what many of them think they know is inaccurate.

It appears as if we were rioting in our newly-found intellectual liberty. Should this be so, the greatest wisdom and sympathy will be necessary for directing the energy into useful channels. Life is now more complex than it was, and modern populations are so great, that most of the real difficulties of life are worse than they were for our forefathers, who had to compete with nature more than with human nature. Modern town life eliminates nature, in this sense, and with it an important part of our education.

Professor Shailer Mathews has written an excellent paper on the aspects of the subject we have just been considering and to which all who are interested should refer.* The main historical facts we have surveyed cannot, as far as they are accurate, be denied. Unless they can be denied we have reached one definite conclusion: *that Institutional Christianity was de-spiritualised by paganism and has never recovered its original purity.*

It is not suggested that all our present difficulties have resulted from this, though it is something to build on; but before we can attempt to array the main reasons for the recent decline in church attendance and membership, a little more evidence solicits our attention.

* In *The Outline of Christianity*, III, Chap. XXXI.

CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL SURVIVALS

"*Christmas trees, Easter eggs, Yule logs, Maypoles, and a hundred other, mostly innocuous, survivals, have their shrivelled roots in the soil of an extinct paganism.*"

"THE EDINBURGH REVIEW."

"*Spectres are appointed to haunt him: one age he is hagridden, bewitched; the next, priestridden, befooled; in all ages, bedevilled.*"

T. CARLYLE: "SARTOR RESARTUS."

1. THE VALUE OF SURVIVALS, WITH VARIOUS EXAMPLES.
2. LAMAISM AND CATHOLICISM.

FAMILIARITY breeds more blindness than contempt. We grow up, quite properly, to accept the various conditions of our environment, until we become habituated to them; and eventually, especially if our minds are occupied with more interesting thoughts, we cease to notice many of them and become oblivious of their existence. Should we then acquaint ourselves with the doings of the past, we may awaken to the fact that some object or custom we had completely forgotten is a lingering survival of an ancient practice.

It is thus, with the majority of our countrymen to-day, regarding the Christian institutions. The church that men pass every day to their work is nothing more than one of the buildings that line the road, and that have no effect on their life. If a funeral service, however, happens to be conducted one day, in the adjoining churchyard, a new train of thoughts may arise. Such thoughts would more effectually enter the mind if one saw, as a friend of the writer saw recently, a gorgeous procession in honour of the relics of St. James of Compostela enter Santiago Cathedral; and the first thought might be: " What a wonderful survival of Mediævalism into the twentieth century! "

Every institution now existing, that had its origin in a hoary antiquity, must be, in part at least, a survival; and this is the glory of many institutions, both sacred and secular. Some ancient ceremonies are well worth preserving for their historic or artistic interest; but it may be necessary for other, and more weighty, considerations to be taken into account.

It is the pride of the historic churches that they are survivals from earlier ages; and were the origin of their ancient customs invariably Christian it would be ungracious to criticise them, even if they appeared to be of little practical use to-day. When these old customs are not Christian, and this is often; when, also, they fail to attract the majority of mankind; there is little (though perhaps still

some) reason for their continuance, for ancient monuments should usually be preserved.

Most of our art and culture has reached us from Greece through Rome. It may be said that its origin, to go no further back, was in Hellenism, which extended throughout the Mediterranean countries and beyond them, before the time of Christ. This Greek culture deservedly became the predominant type of Western Civilisation. It bequeathed to posterity its political institutions, its literature, its philosophy, and its art. In religion alone it gave, perhaps, less than it took from other nations; but even in religion Hellenism furnished, eventually, at least the externals of Christianity.

Of these Hellenistic influences we are concerned only to notice that, in the second century B.C. the Roman Republic was already the paramount power in the west and became permeated by them. Rome had a culture of its own, mainly of Etruscan origin, and this was sturdy enough to resist the flood of Hellenism. The result was that Western Civilisation took on Græco-Roman forms in which the Latin tongue prevailed.

The religion of Rome was Polytheism; it was physically, æsthetically, and artistically beautiful, but morally ugly. As its origin had been in ritual,* so stately ceremonial and other ritual acts formed the greater part of its practice. Its fabled gods and goddesses were shamelessly immoral. "Neither truth and falsehood, nor virtue and vice had any-

* See *Ancient Art and Ritual*, Dr. J. E. Harrison.

thing to do with the worship of the gods. It was a mere affair of custom and tradition."* Cicero has left it on record that the pagan conception of holiness was merely knowledge of the ceremonial.† Hence, Græco-Roman Civilisation, though outwardly joyous and brilliant, was inwardly corrupt; for people are seldom better than their religion. Polytheism was an extensive system of idolatry and superstition. The early Christians condemned it, abhorred it, and left it severely alone; but during the later years of the empire, as we have seen, this gulf between Christianity and Polytheism began to be bridged.

The worship of Mithras, the sun god, was popular in the Empire, and marks the highest point reached by heathenism. Mithraism was described by Prof. Gwatkin as a catholic Church extending, in the third century A.D. from Persia to Britain. It resembled the religion of Isis and other Oriental cults, and had no little influence on Latin Christianity. These cults had clerical orders, mendicant friars, ascetics, and sacrificing priests who were the only mediators between the gods and men. They held daily services and a succession of annual festivals. The priests of Mithras preached and gave advice to their followers. "The devout women who worshipped Isis were very like the devout women of Roman Catholic countries."‡

* Prof. Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 19.
† De Nat. Dea., I, 116.
‡ Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 146.

The birthday of Mithras was celebrated on December 25th with processions, blazing lights and impressive ceremonial. Mithraism included fasting, and baptism " with the mystic seal of Mithras marked on the candidate's brow, in token of his promise to be a faithful ' soldier ' of Mithras to his life's end, and under his banner to fight against the lusts of the flesh and the wiles of the demons. And this again was followed by a common meal of bread and water (afterwards it would seem of wine), in memory of the last meal of Mithras here on earth before the sun's bright chariot carried him away to heaven. There were confessions, too, with penances and absolutions, for Mithras also received sinners."* In practice it was immoral; but it was older than Christianity and most of the copying was done by the Roman Church. There is a Mithraic cave near Hadrian's Wall, at Houseteads, near Hexham, Northumberland.†

Vitruvius, the great Roman architect of the Augustan Age, can be read in our public libraries to-day. He gives the regulations for the building of temples in honour of Jupiter, Venus, Mars, Juno and the other mythical gods and goddesses. The longitudinal orientation of the buildings must be east and west. At the east end is built the cell in which the statues of the gods are erected for the devotions of the faithful.

These examples may suffice to show that Institutional Christianity contains a mass of survivals from

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God, II*, 147. † *The Times*, Jan. 3, 1930.

non-Christian sources. They may be no objection to many people; but to all whose attachment is to our Lord alone, and to those who live for the truth, pagan forms are beyond the pale. They have no right in Christian worship except that of prescription or long usage.

Dean Milman drew a distinction between the theology of the Gospel and its spirit, asserting that the former was retained while the latter was lost by Latin Christianity. Yet even Christian theology became polytheistic in form, and the age dragged the religion down, in several directions, to its own level. A host of subordinate but influential mediators was introduced between God and man. There was the " worship of the Virgin, of angels, of saints and martyrs . . . . Men passed from rational respect for the remains of the dead . . . to the superstitious veneration of relics, and the deification of mortal men."*

The paganising of Christianity began before Constantine, especially at Rome, which was the last as well as the greatest stronghold of Polytheism. The old gods held out in the Eternal City for generations, almost for centuries, after they had been defeated elsewhere. Some heathen practices survived the fall of the Western Empire. " In Christian forms or as mere superstitions they never did cease. . . . The Latin world stood out longer than the Greek, held with more tenacity to heathen ideas and practices, carried over more of them into

* *History of Christianity*, III, 411-423 *passim*.

the Church, and shaped its Christianity more on heathen models."*

The Western Church, though still monotheistic in theory, became polytheistic in practice, as Romanism is yet. February 2nd, for example, was the date in the pagan calendar of the miraculous conception of Juno, the goddess who was invoked by women in childbirth. The Anglican calendar merely changes the name of the goddess to Mary!

The festival *Dei Mortis*, held in Pagan Rome on November 2nd has simply become All Souls' Day in the same calendar. Most of the heathen Pantheon was taken over by Western Christianity. Venus and Cupid became the Virgin and Child. The great god Pan, with his horns and hoofs, became the mediæval devil. The keys of Janus were handed to Peter. Purgatory was pagan, and prayers for the dead of Asiatic heathen origin. The vestments of Numa, such as the amice and alb, were borrowed from the pagans without even the trouble being taken to change their names. The girdle and stole, indeed, are Hebrew. The tonsure was Brahmin in origin and came through the priests of Isis and Serapis. The invocation of saints was that of the *Divi*, or deified men, to whom the heathen prayed for intercession with Jupiter and other gods. The use of holy water was pagan. Incense was both Hebrew and pagan; and the early Christians died dreadful deaths for refusing to touch it on pagan altars.

* Gwatkin: *Knowledge of God*, II, 151-152.

These examples, which are very far from being exhaustive, may illustrate the paganisation of Christianity over a long period, beginning before Constantine. They also show the origin of many parts of our present sacerdotal system.

Superstition was substituted for faith, and magic for religion. The pagan conception, that favours can be won from the gods by doing certain things, was transferred to the Christian God, and moral values were forgotten. Even to this day "popular Christianity commonly retains traces of the polytheism which went before it. . . . The Church of Rome carries over from paganism the legal and ritualistic conception of religion, and its worship of saints differs from that of the old gods only in a change of name and a partial change of the legends connected with them."*

It is important that historical facts should be accepted as such, and not be put aside as if they were merely personal opinions. Hence, all who wish to know the truth are referred to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*† where the primitive "belief in mystic powers attached to food, feasts, ceremonial rites and sacred things" are shown to have been almost universal. The Old Testament prophets consistently opposed these superstitions. Our Lord ignored them. After the Apostolic Age the ecclesiastical emphasis tended to move from the ethical to the sacramental. "By baptism and the Lord's supper

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 76.
† Article, "Christianity."

grace is given (*ex opere operato*) so that man is renewed. . . . The cult became more and more controlled, until ultimately it was completely subject to the priesthood. . . . Participation in the mass* also releases from guilt. . . . As the teaching and person of Jesus were fitted into the framework of Greek philosophy, and the sacraments into the deeper and broader forms of popular belief, so was the organisation shaped by the policy of the Roman Empire. . . . Christianity was conceived to be a new system of law, and faith was interpreted as obedience. Legalism was joined with sacramentarianism, doubling the power of the priest." †

All this, in one institution or another, has come down to us. It is not, of course, Christianity; but it passes as a species of Christianity because it is skilfully mingled with scriptural phraseology, and it deceives many into supposing that it is Christianity. The fact that it is now deceiving a smaller proportion of the English people than it did many years ago is evidence of their increasing enlightment and essential sanity.

Another Hebrew and Pagan conception that has passed down to us through the Reformation, with slight changes, is the veneration for sacred places. The Presence of God, and the alleged presence of the gods, were both localised until our Lord abrogated this primitive belief, for His followers, and

* Reference is here made to the paganised form of the Lord's Supper, J.G.H.

† *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article, "Christianity."

substituted holy people for a holy place. Yet in spite of plain statements repeatedly given in the Christian revelation, such as "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands," the primitive conception still holds its own among us. It is unfortunately true that "every modern country has plenty of people in all ranks of life whose notions of religion are little better than those current in West Africa."*

The most widespread survival of the earliest times is ritualism. As Professor Robertson Smith said: "Ritual is in fact primary for primitive religion, while dogma and myth are secondary."† The performances of ritualists are the most ancient in the world, going back beyond the dawn of Christianity and the earlier revelations of God to primitive heathenism. Dr. Harrison has shown that the origin of ritual was in the choral dance.‡

The affinity of ritualism, therefore, is with the survivals of the primitive in modern women and to a much smaller extent in men. It is a reversion, and this alone makes it objectionable to all who have the inward urge to progress. Fortunately for the human race, this urge exists in a large number of men, who, if not submerged by "survivals" will lead towards the light. Dr. Hatch's conviction is at least as true now as when he stated it, that: "an exaggerated concept . . . of the Christian Ministry

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, I, 254.
† *Encyclopædia Britannica*: Article, "Religion."
‡ *Ancient Art and Ritual.*

had operated, more than any other single cause, to alienate the minds of men from the faith of Christ."* This alienation applies to every form of ancient pagan ceremonial that still survives; and it is not a matter of opinion but of fact. The mind of man has travelled far beyond this early stage of culture; but there is a danger that sacerdotalism will lead a large number of people into an evolutionary cul-de-sac.

It is inevitable that our most advanced thinkers should make conservative divines appear, by comparison, little more than survivals of the past. The difference between these two classes of scholars indicates a large measure of intellectual advancement, and we must be prepared for great changes in the near future.

Our dwindling Church members, familiar with the forms of worship which they love, forget that these forms are largely survivals of past and heathen centuries, and as such out of touch with the new spirit now abroad. There is much in our historic observances that is unattractive to the nine-tenths outside our doors, which one example will illustrate.

The robing of clergy and choirs is part of the order of the religious universe to the relatively few church-people who still adhere to the historic institutions; but the large majority of non-adherents regard it very differently. They have never heard of the apocalyptic conception that white linen typifies the righteousness of saints, and regard the custom of

* Bampton Lecture, 1882.

men and boys being dressed up in cassocks and and surplices as un-British. The flowing robes of foreigners make no appeal to them; and all ecclesiastical millinery is considered, not without reason, as effeminate.

The progress of mankind, judging from that of the last two or three generations, will be still further away from many of these interesting religious survivals. They are now of more historical than spiritual value, and many of them cannot aid Christianity because they are not of Christian, but of Pagan or Hebrew, stock. The few who now desire them will become fewer, for the general trend is not in their direction. "It is difficult for a man to accept orthodox Christianity as the Churches present it to him without treachery to his scientific conscience. . . . Intellectual honesty is, to a large extent, strained out of the Church, and public opinion within it does not reflect either the best knowledge or the most candid temper of the community."*

Religious services of historic interest, such as many of those at present conducted, are attractive to a large number of educated people. Such services may have impressed the ignorant in the past; but an elementary school education is only sufficient to enable those who have little further enlightenment to realise the profound unintelligibility of the greater part of our liturgies. Most of the parts that might otherwise be intelligible are archaic.

*The Dean of St. Paul's in *Outline of Christianity*, IV, xv.

For any one normal Anglican service to be expounded and explained so that the mass of the people could understand the lessons and psalms (the prayers are more comprehensible), at least an hour's lecturing would be necessary. As this is grotesquely impossible, and as the fifteen to twenty minutes' address, which is as much as the average congregation will now endure, cannot do more than touch the fringe of the unknown, improvement is almost negligible, and it is seldom attempted.

These services, which so many of us enjoy, are largely Hebraic survivals, Christianised to a certain extent, but not "understanded of the people." This keeps them away because people are becoming sensitive of their ignorance; but these survivals are not always attractive to educated men and women.

A professional man, who had just attended church for the first time after an absence of many years, recently told the writer that his strongest impression was the *foreign character* of the Anglican service. He had seen it as it really is, which we cannot do because of our familiarity with it. Much of it is Asiatic and Levantine; but we are so accustomed to this un-English nature of our forms of worship that, whether we understand it all or not, we have ceased to notice the fact.

The English Reformation is disappointing to simple Christians because so much more needed doing. Such an upheaval was an opportunity for the complete renovation of an institution that had

waited for it long enough. It did not get any thoroughgoing reform; and far too much Roman Institutionalism was retained. This is one of the reasons for any neglect of the Church of England to-day. The rugged independence of the English character cannot endure anything resembling nursery control. One bureaucratic government is enough for us; the State leaves nothing more to be desired in this direction. To have Churches also copying these methods, and then expecting them to be well received, is asking too much of human nature.

A form of ecclesiasticism nominally Protestant was established at the Reformation; but it has borne too much resemblance to Romanism, as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* points out.* "Protestantism has always been hampered with Latin survivals. Its unamiable features, like its witch-finding, its Calvinism, its pictures of hell, and its hard and fast conception of authority in general, are usually due to ways of thinking carried over from the Middle Ages, and more in harmony with the Latin spirit than with its own."† One more remarkable survival, though it exists in the heart of Asia, is worthy of our attention.

2. *Græco-Roman Lamaism.*—Dr. Sven Hedin is one of the greatest modern, scientific, Asiatic explorers. His knowledge of Tibet and its religion (Lamaism), is unrivalled. He writes: "Lamaism

* Article, "Christianity."
† Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 157.

is only a corrupt form of pure Buddhism."* Buddhism dates from the sixth century B.C., being a branch of the Hindu Religion. Hinduism was polytheistic, with sacred writings, the Vedas. Its priests had elaborated a system of ritual and sacrifice, together with the theory and practice of caste.

The similarity of Lamaism and Græco-Roman "Christianity" is most remarkable. Lamaism "retained the superstitions which in pre-Buddhistic times found expression in wild fanatical devil dances, rites and sacrifices,"† in the same way that Latin "Christianity" incorporated the rites and superstitions of Paganism. Both the European and the Asiatic priests kept up the primitive mumbo-jumbo, to retain their ascendancy over the ignorant.

In addition to numerous references, descriptions, and illustrations of Lamaism, Dr. Sven Hedin devotes a whole chapter of nineteen pages to the similarity between the external forms of Lamaism and Catholicism.‡ Those who are interested in ecclesiastical survivals should consult Dr. Hedin's great work, which we must be content to quote very briefly.

Both Lamaism and Romanism are hierarchies; the former having two popes, who are "most holy" and live in Vaticans similarly to the bishop of Rome. One of these Grand Lamas, if not both, wears a yellow mitre, holds in his hands at certain

* *Trans-Himalaya*, vol. I, 312.
† *Ibid.*
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. III, ch. xxvi.

INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

THE MAIN HALL OF THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE AT MINOBU

From a photograph by Mr. Herbert G. Ponting, author of "In Lotus Land: Japan"

functions a rosary, leads a life prescribed by religious regulations, receives a kind of " Peter's pence " and sells relics, etc. There are papal estates and colleges of high priests. These priests resemble cardinals, and their bearing is most noble. Lamaism has seven orders of monks, who are celibates, and live in isolation from the world, and in idleness, on the superstitions of the vulgar. Some of the monkish orders never touch worldly matters.

The monasteries are numerous, and often very large, especially those at Llasa and Tashilunpo; the latter has 3,800 resident monks. They have nuns and nunneries, hermits and ascetics, cloistered towns, with the love of darkness and mystery. The atmosphere of the daily services in their gompas is the same as that in Catholic churches. Robed monks chant; a single voice reciting with the hum of voices in response; litanies are intoned and hymns sung. Bells ring during service, and there is the " dim religious light " in venerable and highly artistic buildings.

Special vestments are worn for these services. The Lamas have incense, holy water, sacred images and pictures, the endless repetition of meaningless prayers, altars and altar lights, prayers for the dead, pilgrimages to sacred shrines, retreats, prostrations, alleged miracles and many other kinds of superstition.

The Tibetan people are priest ridden. They are stimulated by stirring exhibitions and impressive ritual. The religion is immutable, because supposed

to be perfect. The priests are the mediators between the gods and the people. The Grand Lamas hold the *dorche* or thunderbolt as the emblem of power. The priests cross themselves and administer bread and wine. They believe in re-incarnation.

Dr. Sven Hedin found no paintings or images of any kind in the apartments of the Tashi Lama, with whom he spent a considerable time.

Jane E. Duncan was similarly impressed when in Western Tibet, and writes as follows: "After seeing this and other gompas the thought forced itself on the attention that, though all the Christian sects would repudiate with horror the suggestion that their own forms of worship resembled in any way that of idolaters, yet it is the fact that the rituals of the Hindus and Buddhists, of the Orthodox Greek Church, of the Roman Catholics and a section of Anglicans, have alike developed, in a greater or less degree, in the direction of vestments, images, pictures, banners, flowers, lights, incense, handbells, rosaries, offerings and of a taste for darkness in churches and temples. The earliest Roman Catholic missionaries who penetrated into Tibet in the Sixteenth Century were so uncomfortably impressed by the resemblance of Buddhism to Romanism that they thought it must be an imitation by the devil of the religion of Christ."*

The difference between sacerdotalism and Christianity was, and yet is, profound. Sacer-

* *A Summer Ride through Western Tibet*, 42.

dotalism, whether in its polytheistic, Catholic, or Buddhist forms, is a mechanical or mechanistic system.* Christianity is organic and independent of externals. The inorganic system has come down to us. Its dreary routine of oft-repeated liturgies and litanies, however æsthetically beautiful, is as formal as the turning of a Buddhist prayer wheel. The Christian principle is life; and this does not mean keeping up the interest in gatherings of any kind by displays of physical or oratorical energy. The life of Christianity is spirit, for it is the Life of Christ. All life is maintained in organisms by correspondence with environment; and the true environment of the Christian soul, as Henry Drummond showed, is God.

Here is seen the need of discrimination. The knowledge of God is itself a survival; but while nearly all the externals of Institutional Christianity have come down to us from heathen sources, Christianity itself is the great heritage of a divine revelation. The will of God was made known to men and is still accessible to all who wish to obey it. The greatest good can be attained only by the building of human character on the basis of God's revealed will. It cannot be produced mechanically or by any merely outward observances; and crutches are a curse if they keep a patient weak.

* There does not appear to be an English word with the exact meaning required. "Mechanistic" may be the best for our present purpose, as there is no suggestion of materialistic philosophy.

"The change from polytheism to Christianity made no break, for the Gospel was construed in terms of the old religion." Hence, "the fundamental conception of religion as collective, legal, ceremonial, and exclusive is very much the same through the history of Rome,* and has undergone no essential changes from the times of Romulus and Numa to our own; and the changes we do find are not so much the work of Christianity as of the Eastern worships which went before it."†

* i.e. Both Pagan and Christian, J.G.H.
† Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 129-130.

CHAPTER VII

INSTITUTIONALISM

" *Many a monk, and many a friar,*
Many a knight, and many a squire,
With a great many more of lesser degree,
In sooth a goodly company;
And they served the Lord Primate on bended knee.
Never, I ween, was a prouder seen,
Read of in books, or dreamt of in dreams,
Than the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims! "

1. Institutionalism in General. 2. Institutional Morality. 3. The First Assumption, that Christianity is Primarily Institutional, Denied. 4. Christianity Primarily Individualistic, not Corporate.

1. The Advantages of institutions are obvious: they have greater stability and comprehension than individuals, though their permanence is seldom without some change. There is nothing human, however, that has no disadvantages; and the durability of institutions induces an inorganic type of rigidity that leads to inertia. All corporations tend to check initiative, retard progress, and promote law rather than liberty. Both law and liberty are necessary in the world; but organisms need external liberty and favourable conditions, not external

laws. Law they have, within themselves, and in relation to their environment. Externally imposed restrictions, however enlightened they are supposed to be, will check organic development.

Thus institutions are not altogether suitable for the development of Christianity, which is essentially organic; though they may have been advisable in the past, for the preservation of its tenets, provided they had been kept strictly in their proper place. This place was one of due subordination to God's revelation, of which the institution was merely the vehicle of transmission. The visible Church, however, like Judaism, has jealously guarded the letter of God's Word while early losing its Spirit.

Improvements in the organisation of an institution, as an institution, are new hindrances to the growth and display of its spirit. We cannot have it both ways, though this is what has been attempted: to treat Christianity partly as a living thing and partly as a machine. It is either organic or inorganic. It may be said that it resembles the human organism in having an eternal soul in a mortal body; and this is, perhaps, the best analogy. It is not a complete analogy and we must claim the liberty to change it. Every new law and custom of the institution restricts freedom, until the Spirit of Christ is driven out and men become mere cogs in a machine.

There are certain laws governing all human institutions, that the Churches, in common with

other institutions, have for centuries followed. One of these may be termed " the struggle for life." The maintenance of its existence, as an institution, is in one important sense its most pressing aim. This, in practice, means that the officials who maintain the institution must concern themselves mainly with supporting and consolidating their own positions, until they and their offices are established in an entrenched position. Thus the *purpose* of the institution is side-tracked for its *sustentation.* This tends to become a fixed principle, and when this principle is once admitted all development is arrested and the bureaucratic government of a visible Church is reached.

Had the visible Church been the true spiritual body, or bride, of Christ she would never have placed her own advancement, even during the first six centuries, before that of the Gospel; but Augustine admitted that the two were not identical. The primary command of the old and new covenants, " God First," was forgotten; and the visible institution fell into the common error of putting self before God. Her correct attitude should have been:

> " The Bride eyes not her garments,
> But her dear Bridegroom's face."

The common natural law of self-preservation has made the Christian institutions forget their supreme function.

Herbert Spencer pointed out that while "the absence of settled arrangements negative co-operation, yet co-operation of a higher kind is hindered by the arrangements which facilitate co-operation of a lower kind."* This is a general law that institutional Christianity has shown to be true. Had the Cyprianic theories never been introduced, the world might have been evangelised long ago, though various social amenities of civilisation would have been lacking. The Churches have inherited a tendency to make many natural improvements in the lot of man while talking about his spiritual advancement.

There are ecclesiastical leaders to-day who admit that their Churches did not need, as they supposed not long ago, more modern organisation, but a better spirit. Others knew this all the time. The leaders may now find that this is a gift no institution can bestow; for institutions, as corporate communities, are not a high development, biologically, but are seen to perfection among the ants and bees. True progress is not in their direction. Christian individuality is the highest form of life, because it is ready to sacrifice itself for the good of others.

The Dean of Canterbury says that it is "typical of the West as of the East that people want Christ, without Church systems." He is emphatic on this point, and reiterates his message that "the soul of the world" is crying for Christ, but is "not

* *Political Institutions*, 257.

looking for a religious system."* This has been the burden of the present writer for many years, but it is not institutionalism.

A little religious gathering sprang up in the homes of some Church people. The Vicar, not being an institutionalist, *left it alone*. He gladly went when invited, and much enjoyed it; but was confident that the movement would be ruined if the institution gained control. This weekly meeting was very much alive when last heard of.

Dean Sheppard has diagnosed the disease from which Institutional Christianity is suffering in almost identical terms with those used here, though we shall see that very different treatments are suggested for the patient. It may be well to anticipate these suggestions as far as to say that while the Dean would resort to ecclesiastical surgery, the view taken here is that no serious operation will ever be submitted to, and that there are brighter prospects in other directions.

Dr. Sheppard returns again and again to his theme that our Lord has been too great for the institutions which have taken His Name: "I find it hard to persuade myself that there is any Church to-day that does not need radically to alter its outlook and its scale of values if it is to count itself as actually Christian. When the values of Jesus Christ are compared with the values of the Christian institution, then something has gone dreadfully astray."†

* *The Impatience of a Parson*, 13. † *Ibid.*, 70, 71.

The comparative method is valuable, and has been utilised in Comparative Anatomy, Comparative Politics and other subjects. We now need Comparative Christianity, to measure the present institutions against the only reliable norm, which is the revelation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This is no new thought; but we have shrunk from acting upon it.

We have attempted, in the previous chapters, to ascertain as precisely as possible where the institutions went astray. The first step is the diagnosis of the disease, which is the essential preliminary to any treatment. We need as complete freedom from prejudice as possible in order to see things as they are; and unless we can acquire some approximation to the simple vision for truth no improvement can be expected.

"Is it that we have come to care more for the prestige of our own Church and the niceties of Church order than for the Spirit of our Lord Himself?" "All through the centuries the Institution has quietly repressed the spontaneity and radiance of Christ Himself and has directed mankind . . . to an ever increasing valuation of itself." "We have got to the stage when it is actually believed . . . that the only approach to the God of Jesus Christ that may be guaranteed as perfectly safe is the channel of their own particular Christian denomination."*

The Churches, which can only justify their existence by leading people to God, have been one

* *The Impatience of a Parson*, 73-75, *passim*.

of the greatest hindrances in keeping them from Him. Yet there seems no purpose in reviling them; neither does there seem much hope in attempting to reform them. "God fulfils Himself in many ways," and He is not entirely dependent upon them. This we hope to show before concluding.

It should be noticed, in leaving this part of the subject, that the extension of structure in any institution tends to check, while it is designed to extend, its functions. Increase of vigour is necessary to justify structural extension; for a larger organisation needs more strength than a smaller one to maintain it in the same state of vitality. A Church abounding in spiritual energy will develop normally; but the mistake is made of increasing structure when the spirit of an institution is actually declining. This merely hastens decadence.

2. *Institutional Morality.*—The modern State presents an interesting paradox. Its ideals appear to be higher than those of earlier governments, but its actions are not controlled by the principles of private or ordinary morality. This is not a hopeful sign, and has recently been commented upon in various journals. Every Cabinet Minister may be of the highest personal integrity, yet the corporate actions of the whole body exhibit a species of herd morality, that might is right.

All institutions, in varying degrees, seem to suffer from the same complaint. Town Councils

and Joint Stock Companies are notorious for their want of moral principle. The Army Headquarters staff seem to have been tarred with a similar brush during the war; for Brigadier-General Baker-Carr says: "The individual members of G.H.Q. were the best of fellows personally: it was only in their corporate capacity that they were unreasonable."* Even Universities and Churches are not exempt from this fault. Examples could be given and reasons discussed if space permitted; but our main concern is a recognition of this fact.

The Dean of Canterbury wrote, in italics: "*A Church may not be corporately less Christian than the Christian individual.* At the moment there is a grave contrast between the piety of many an individual Christian and the corporate impiety of the Churches."†

It seems necessary to admit that there is *an institutional psychology and morality*, different from the sum-total psychology and morality of the members of an institution. It may be akin to mob psychology; it may be a survival of the herd instinct; it may be neither. It certainly exists, and it needs some attention.

The fact of an institution being professedly Christian does not, apparently, deliver it from the laws of all institutions; but the problem of the Churches' institutional morality is serious. The

* *The Times Literary Supplement*, April, 1930. Review on *From Chauffeur to Brigadier*.

† *The Impatience of a Parson*, 28.

Churches have taught Christian morality, which a large number of people are trying to practise. These people now find that, while individual churchmen still set good examples, the Churches, as institutions, are defaulters. They tyrannise over and levy hateful impositions upon their members, in addition to many other delinquencies.

To make this worse, all institutions hate reform; and the Churches are unlikely either to admit its necessity or to permit enough of it to do any good. God's work is best done with individuals. Time and energy spent on them will bring forth more fruit than if spent on agitating for the improvement of ancient corporations.

An institution is a species of machine that will run, after a time, with very little control; but unless it is continually kept under restraint it is liable to do and to suffer damage, or even to end in disaster. It resembles a motor car or a ship, each of which requires expert handling and careful steering. One moment's inattention may be fatal. The line of least resistance is to let the machine take its course; and this is what usually happens with old institutions. It becomes difficult, and may be indeed impossible, even for the helmsman to alter the course.

If it be granted that an institutional form of Christianity is advisable, it by no means follows that this must be its only form, or that it should exterminate the spiritual or mystic element. Yet the former is continually assumed, and the latter appears to take place. It is necessary, therefore, to

face these issues as clearly as possible. The decrease in the membership of Protestant Churches forces us to reconsider certain assumptions that have been made for centuries.

3. *The First Assumption, that Christianity is Primarily an Institutional Religion, denied.*—Christianity is usually assumed to be, not only a religion, but a religion of institutional form or forms. Let us consider, very briefly, if this is strictly correct.

Complexity, to most people, is simply confusion. Religion has become one of the most complex things in life, and it seems so chaotic that few can endure it. If it was simple and straightforward many who now break away would keep in touch with us. Surely God intended Christianity to be simple. There is nothing simpler than the Gospel, in its essence; though the mind of man may never fathom its depths. All the present complexity is the work of men's hands, directed by unspiritual minds. Hence the great need to-day is a return to first principles, or to simple godliness, with or without religious accessories.

It is granted at once, and gladly, that approximately nine-tenths of the English people do not appear to make the assumption that Christianity is an institutional affair. They show no interest in the subject; but the remaining tenth part of our population includes most Church members, who would find little fault, it may be supposed, with the terms of this proposition.

Whatever else Christianity may or may not have been, it was undoubtedly, and fundamentally, spiritual; and because it was spiritual it could not be instituted on the model of any human religion. Spirit may utilise matter, but it is spirit that matters. Material things of any kind, including human institutions, are not essential to spirit, though they may have a subordinate usefulness. The subservience of matter to spirit is a cosmic fact. That being so, our Lord filled His immediate followers with His Spirit, but He did little more towards the founding of an institution. He utilised, indeed, one earthly model in His teaching, for it was a model that came originally from heaven, and that was the kingdom.

Christ's kingdom was to be a real and not a constitutional form of polity. It consisted essentially of only two classes: the King and His subjects, where God not only reigns but rules. He does not resemble earthly kings in needing any assistance, yet He appointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons, presbyters and bishops, "the Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will."

Israel had been the first expression of God's kingdom. It was earthly, except for its heavenly King, and composed of one nation. Christ inaugurated a new and extended form, the second phase, of this kingdom. It was to be heavenly and spiritual, to consist of representatives from every nation who enter it by a spiritual birth, as our Lord explained

to Nicodemus. No other means of entry was provided.

Without discussing the identity or otherwise of Christ's kingdom and His Church,* we can say that, from where we stand in history, it has had a continuous existence of over 1,900 years and now includes representatives of nearly every nation. The Kingdom of God, in one of its two forms, has persisted since the Exodus, or for a period of about 3,300 years; and God's rule over men can be traced back in unbroken sequence for a further 200 years.

The nearest approach to this was the old Chinese Empire, but it was not even an unbroken succession of rulers. The Roman Empire endured for no more than half this length of time. There is therefore a remarkable stability about the rule of God over men, unparalleled in the most venerable of human institutions. God's government has quietly increased and extended through thirty-five centuries. It still calls upon men for their voluntary allegiance; and the King respects the free-will of His subjects. In its present form as the Kingdom of Christ it elicits the best from everyone; but each and all are left otherwise free, and not dragooned by God into rigid institutions. The human attempts to narrow down Christ's Kingdom to a close corporation have no divine authority.

* It may be advisable to repeat that we are concerned here very little with the Church of Christ, except in so far as it may coincide with our Lord's Kingdom.

It is usually assumed that our Lord intended His Church to develop into one or more great institutions based on the model of secular governments; but the weakness of these institutions drives us back to Him who seems to have desired something very different and much better.

The institutional element was Christ's in origin only to the extent of " the Twelve "; all the rest of it was pagan, and did not become dominant for about three hundred years, when its model was the Roman Empire. There is no evidence that our Lord *intended* Christianity to become a great worldly institution, though there is evidence that He knew it would develop into one. It did this, like a great tree, which subsequently produced many suckers; but we are entitled to suggest, in view of the past history and present failure of the visible Churches, that the transformation of Christianity into a pretentious institution may have been a mistake, somewhat as sin was a mistake.

The life of the visible Churches, as institutions, has been well within the realm of natural law. These institutions have had members whose lives have risen to the confines of this realm and possibly have crossed them; but for sixteen or seventeen centuries they might have been literary or scientific societies judging from the human normality of their actions. They have been, indeed, for institutions making superhuman claims, unduly human, in a manner that our modern learned societies have never exhibited; for we cannot conceive their

presidents or secretaries living evil lives. It has been estimated that eighty per cent of the Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society are Christians. The organised Churches to-day could scarcely equal this; and having shown such a disproportionate amount of human frailty in the past, we feel justified in asking if anything like them was intended. Confirmed institutionalists can only strive to whitewash their organisations; but they have been performing this operation for centuries, and it has not prevented the present falling away. It is not, of course, suggested that no visible Church should have arisen. On the other hand, the assumption that Christianity was intended to become exclusively an institutional religion, from the *Christian* standpoint, is clearly false. "The view that Jesus deliberately founded a Church (an ecclesiastical institution), appointed the Apostles its rulers, settled its rites, gave it its doctrine and guaranteed its fidelity, can only be maintained by discarding history altogether."*

Those who will may continue to believe that God sent His Son merely to ordain another new institution to compete with institutions already in existence. This view, however, is losing ground, for it resembles a pyramid balanced upon its apex. Our Lord is the Head of all His believers who form His Body the Church; but this resembles the Kingdom of God more than any visible institution. The unity of its members is in their Lord

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Christianity."

alone and not, as with paganism, in external ordinances.

"It is one thing to rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance in making such regulations as the Churches might require; quite another to take for granted that such guidance is given to one visible institution and no other."* The Christianity of our Lord, of the Apostles, and even of the first two centuries, was transformed until it would not have been recognised by the apostles as the faith for which they contended and died.

4. *Christianity Primarily Individualistic not Corporate.*— The Hebrew unit was the nation, and Judaism a corporate religion, designed for human immaturity and not intended to be permanent. Its main purpose was to lead on towards the perfect revelation of God's will in His Son. The corporate basis was then abolished in favour of the individual unit. Professor Peake writes that although "Israel felt itself . . . to be in contact with God Himself . . . the nation was too gross a medium for the higher development. It had to be replaced by chosen individuals more finely attuned to the nature and the will of God. This also is revelation through history, but it is the history of the individual—in other words, his experience."†

Hence there was nothing of the herd element in the origin of Christianity, unless it was in the

* Gwatkin: *Early Church History*, I, 300.

† "The Preparation for Christianity," in *Outline of Christianity*, I, 23.

training of Christ's followers to become fishers of men, and it was not prominent there. Our Lord came as the Sower of the seed of eternal life in the heart of the individual. The New Testament is perfectly clear that this was done, normally, by one at a time; for the entrance to God's Kingdom was to be by personal choice. Great revivals, such as the day of Pentecost, were not everyday occurrences, and their results not *completely* satisfactory; for many spurious conversions were then, as they are yet, caused by undue excitement. Even when large numbers of people were converted simultaneously, the spiritual experience was, as it is still, a personal and individual matter.

Christianity was primarily and fundamentally individualistic. Our Lord individualised His mission in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost son, and the lost piece of silver. "Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it." Souls entered one by one. Only individuals can commune with God. The overemphasis that has been placed on the corporate aspect of Christianity, an aspect that was intended to be secondary, is destroying its life.

The life of Christianity, like all life, is invisible. Its effects alone are seen; and they depend upon the amount and quality of the spiritual force within the individual. This, in its turn, depends upon the relationship of the soul to God; in other words, upon what is called the mystic element. This, in part, is the prayer life, which has been nominally

maintained by the Churches, but which, in fact, has been relegated to an inferior position in favour of the institutional element. The spiritual state of the Churches to-day is the proof of this.

There was probably a good reason why the Lord spoke of " two or three " gathering together in His Name; He may have referred to the Christian man and his wife at the family altar. Presumably Christ did not anticipate large numbers, for His teaching eliminates the crowd. It has proved impossible, as Christianity developed, to keep out the " tares," or professing Christians who know not the Lord, and they have spoilt the crop, or the corporate conception in its purity, as He foretold.

This may have been why God gave little guidance as to corporate development. There has been another assumption with reference to this: that the reason for the divine silence was that men could work out institutional matters for themselves. They have done so, at the expense of losing the spirit of Christianity, crushing it under their institutional machine. It is at least equally probable that the silence was intended to teach us there was little need of organisation, and that if it was not kept down to a minimum it would ruin the true life—as it has done.

The point can be settled, perhaps, by the two-fold nature of the Christian. As long as the natural man is in subjection to the spirit all is well; but the evil is done as soon as a system springs up that appeals to the lower nature. Great institutions cannot be

maintained purely on spiritual principles. They depend on the human authority of man over man, with pride, arrogance and vain-glory, all of the poor natural man. Leading ecclesiastics, such as some of the popes, have shown that the highest officials need not even be Christians; and administrative work is unfavourable to the higher life. The institutions cannot avoid dependence upon carnal, rather than spiritual principles.

Further, there seems good evidence that God never intended an organised uniformity of worship, or perhaps of anything; for He made diversity the greatest element in Nature, and man capable of defying even His Own Will. Man has defied God. As we cannot assume that the Creator would be surprised at the result of His Own Work; and as we know that He is good; we are left with a belief that He will bring goodness out of evil without enforcing uniformity, or in spite of diversity. Institutional uniformity is a mechanical contrivance, not in accordance with God's plan in Nature.

We may go another step, for we find institutionalism cultivating weakness and servility, while independence fosters courage, initiative and resource. There is no progress, and there may be decadence, in the former; it is mechanistic. Individuality, on the other hand, is life and strength. Since the Reformation gave men liberty they must choose between submission to authority and the following of their own private judgment. Whichever is chosen the responsibility will be great. "That the

world will ever again return to the old sacerdotal hierarchy to receive from it in pupilage its beliefs and directions is not even a reasonable dream. . . . It is a tribal and not a Christian idea to demand that all be like ourselves before we can have fellowship with them. . . . Faith is not faith if it doubts that truth can be its own manifestation and righteousness its own appeal. When that is seen, ecclesiastical authority can no more be regarded as any kind of worthy substitute. Whether it is ecclesiastically profitable or not, the emancipation of the human spirit has been the means whereby all God's greatest truths have been seen, and this is as true of religion as of science. And, if we could learn to seek fellowship in freedom, if it do not give us ecclesiastical union, it may give us a unity of the spirit, which may be better."*

The Latin Church was led astray in adopting so much of the structure and spirit of the pagan empire, though autocracy was the obvious *natural* model for any aspiring institution at that time; but had the Church not degenerated spiritually it would have recoiled from following such an example. The ecclesiastical institution, henceforward, developed without the authority of God, and we are now suffering some of the consequences. Christianity and the Roman Empire were based on opposite principles.

The basis of true Christian cohesion was " the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Pagan

* Rev. Dr. J. W. Oman: *Outline of Christianity*, III, XXII.

and Christian institutionalism of Rome was founded on law, and Roman law on force. The vertebra of this legalism has extended solidly down to us, and is one of the greatest hindrances to Christianity now. "The old machinery of ecclesiastical government remained unimpaired throughout the Reformation in England."* In addition to this, "the ritual aspect of religion tends to grow with the increasing complexity of the social order. When this tendency prevails, religion takes on the specific character of legal observance."† One result of this is that individual Christians, who are members of these institutions constructed on legal and political rather than Christian principles, are continually struggling against the dead weight of their own churches. If not, they must either succumb to the institutionalism and become decadent, or secede. This will lead us in the next chapter to a more fundamental question.

"The first principle of the Reformation was the old belief that the knowledge of God is direct and personal. Any man may help us with ghostly counsel and advice, and any man may assure us that sin is forgiven, and Christ's ministers have power and authority so to help and assure us; but neither Church nor priest can do more than bear witness of truth, and warn us that we shall refuse it at our peril. The Church is commissioned to be a witness and keeper of truth, but not its judge or

* Professor Hamilton Thompson: *Essays Catholic and Critical*, 361.
† *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Religion."

its interpreter. If the knowledge of God is direct and personal, it must in the end be a personal experience depending on personal character, not on any action of other men. Church ordinances may have a great value in influencing that personal character; but as *ex opere operato* rites they are worthless."*

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 221-222.

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE MORE THAN RELIGION

" The Churches have corporately so misunderstood the message of the Founder, and so mishandled and mislaid His Values . . . that what survives and does duty nowadays, through the Churches, as Christianity, is a caricature of what Christ intended."

THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY:
" THE IMPATIENCE OF A PARSON."

1. ANOTHER ASSUMPTION, THAT CHRISTIANITY IS ONLY A RELIGION, QUESTIONED. 2. THE ECCLESIA. 3. CHRISTIANITY UNIQUE. 4. CHRISTIANS NOT NECESSARILY RELIGIOUS.

1. ARCHDEACON RAWLINSON writes of the intellectual revolution of the last half-century that " the whole mode of approach to theological questions . . . has been given a new orientation. The theologian of to-day . . . is in contact with a new temper of mind. . . . A living and robust faith (it is now widely recognised), if it is to enter adequately into its intellectual heritage, and to proclaim the Gospel with efficiency and power to the living minds of to-day, requires an environment of intellectual and spiritual freedom as the very atmosphere in which it must breathe."*

This accurately describes our present position. From the new viewpoint we have now attained we

* *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, 71-72.

must lift up our eyes to the distant hills. More extended horizons await us; and we shall need larger maps on which to inscribe them than the pre-scientific examples of ancient cartography that have been inherited from the Middle Ages.

While some men are fully content if they are assured of apostolic authority, others cannot help thinking that there is no difference in kind between the Twelve and ourselves, and that only One can claim our unquestioning obedience. Apostolic authority is weighty, but it is not beyond criticism, for the Twelve made many and grievous mistakes. There would be less, though perhaps still some, occasion for further inquiry if they had left an unimpeachable record that there should be one, and only one, form of Church polity; but Canon Streeter has recently shown that they did nothing of the kind.* Hence the whole question is still open to discussion, not merely as to whether the most primitive Christian order was episcopal, presbyterian, or congregational, which is relatively unimportant (as it relates only to the vehicle of Christianity and not to Christianity itself), but on a fundamental issue.

A few reasons have been indicated briefly to show that the assumption of Christianity being nothing more than an institutional religion was not historically correct, and a second assumption has also been touched upon. A third and even greater assumption has been that *Christianity was only a religion.*

* *The Primitive Church*, Burnett Hillman Streeter (Macmillan, 1929).

These assumptions reduce the scope of Christianity very much. Unless we are hopelessly bigoted we can see that it would be vastly greater if it was more than a religion; it might then appeal to a larger proportion than one-tenth of the population. If it is only a religion its day is done in England, for in this form it is now progressing towards extinction. We have no reason to assume that the present downward curve will turn upward; but there is good evidence that Christianity is advancing simultaneously with the decline of its institutional forms.

It is obvious that our opinions on this will be fashioned very largely by our definitions. These were given provisionally in Chapter I, and more fully described in the third and following chapters. Risky as it is to define Christianity, one's own conception of it must be delimited, though others may have better definitions. *Christianity is the way of life.* Our Lord is the Life, as well as the Light, of the world. When Christianity is a life, and the only eternal life, the formation of Christian character here and for always is assured. Our present institutional religion is not doing this very much, or there would be much less selfishness evident. As most of the religion in the world has nothing to do with God, it is conceivable that godliness may be independent of religion; but this we must investigate.

Christianity has been a religion from very early days. It has had, as a religion, far from an

unblemished history, and it is not at present a conspicuous success. On the other hand, it was originally " the way of life," and not a new religion to succeed Judaism. Christians were called " the people of the way." Christianity has done, and is still doing, remarkably well in other, non-religious, if allied directions. For example, it has raised the moral tone of a large, and perhaps the most important, part of humanity, not because it was religion but because it was Christianity. This is seen by the fact that most of the non-religious nine-tenths have moral ideals and live decent lives.

These facts point to something wrong in the traditional view of Christianity being only a religion. That an incorrect assumption has been held for a very long time, or even almost from the time of our Lord, should not deter us from exploring every possible avenue that may lead in the right direction.

Christianity, we repeat was unique; it was not one religion among others, such as Buddhism, which existed before Christ, or Mahommedanism, which has arisen since. The former has the greatest number of followers in the world, but is not a religion in the sense of having any relation to a god, though Gautama has virtually been deified; it is simply a cult. Islam may be a true religion concerning God, in the sense that Judaism is a true religion; both are monotheistic. Christianity stands apart by reason of the Revelation of the Triune God it has received, as a matter of history,

and which proves that He exists objectively. There is no proof that other gods exist, except subjectively as human imaginations; the Miltonic theory of their objective existence was that they were demons. If they were, they must have been created by God and can be destroyed by Him; but demonology is beyond us.

The word "religion" (threeskia) occurs five times in the Bible; and the word "religious" (threeskos), except in the sense of "superstitious," twice. Three of the former and one of the latter references are to the Jews' religion. The three remaining references, all of them in the Epistle of St. James, are in the following passage: "If any man among you seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

This word "religion," so familiar to us, is used only twice, and the word "religious" no more than once, with reference to Christianity. Each time it is used by the same writer and by no other; and each time to enforce, neither services, ceremonials, sacraments nor sanctuaries, but practical morality as the result of the Christian life. In contrast with this fact, that neither our Lord nor any other writer of the New Testament than St. James ever used these words, we notice that the

* St. James i, 26-27.

Kingdom of God is spoken of more than a hundred times, and by all the principal writers.

2. *The Ecclesia.*—The word "church," until it was abused, was probably the most suitable name for the Christian Society, at least in each locality, though our Lord may never have actually used it.* He always spoke of a kingdom, which is a much more comprehensive form of polity than a synagogue; the latter being the original form of the apostolic society. The principal word used, at that time, as is well known, was the Greek word *ecclesia.* "The English word 'Church' represents the Greek *Ecclesia*"; † and *the English for ecclesia is assembly or congregation.*

The *ecclesia*, originally, was the primitive assembly of Greek freemen. It was the sovereign assembly of the Athenian constitution at the time of Solon (c. 600 B.C.), who increased its powers; and it may be said to have been the political ancestor of our House of Commons and other popular assemblies. There seems to be nothing religious about this; but it must be remembered that Polytheism was the Athenian State Religion just as Institutional Christianity is now the English State Religion, and nearly everthing in Athens was related to its religion.

The words "assembly" and "congregation" were used of God's people Israel in the Old Testament, as also, of course, was the word "synagogue" of local assemblies. These terms

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Church," *re* Matthew xvi, 18.
† *Ibid.*

were simply taken over by Christians, "assembly" being the commonest; but other terms, such as "brotherhood," also were used. The Christians were brethren of each other and of the Lord Jesus; thus expressing a most intimate and beautiful relationship. If all who say so much about "church" authority would use one of its synonyms, we should understand more clearly what is intended.*

Christianity was at first a Jewish sect, but this was not its destiny, and it broke away from Judaism into a universal society. Some people seem to have a form of human frailty that constitutionally assumes the necessity of clothing conceptions, as if in a nude state they were liable criminally. Such people are haberdashers in thought. It does not occur to them that Christianity, essentially, may be life; and that as natural life is the greatest factor in nature, so spiritual life may be the greatest and the controlling element in the Kingdom of God.

The human body necessarily was the habitation of this higher life, which was divine: "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost," and similarly in other passages. The sum-total of believers in Christ formed His Kingdom and local groups were assemblies, congregations, or ecclesias. The Jewish taint made these, in varying degrees, religious; but it is far from clear that the divine intention was to add yet another, even though a better, religious cult to the many already in the world. Had that been so, surely our Saviour would have

* See *The Rise of the Christian Church* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1929).

been a priest among men* and would have ordained priests. Had He intended the ecclesiastical hierarchies that arose later He would have instituted them. All such institutional orders had belonged, on the one hand to Paganism, and on the other to the Mosaic Religion that Christ deliberately and necessarily abrogated. Whatever Christianity was intended to become, we may be certain that it was not the purpose of God for it to develop into an unauthorised imitation of either Polytheism or Judaism.

When it was God's purpose for men to have a full-dressed religion of priests, altars and sacrifices, He divinely ordained every part of it; and every detail was carried out "as the Lord commanded Moses." Religious ceremonies are particularly suited to the childhood of mankind, as Macaulay said: "for those incapable of contemplating pure truth." The purpose of the Mosaic Religion, as the New Testament proves, was completely fulfilled by our Saviour, and it ceased.

3. *Christianity was Unique.*—Our Lord was God's greatest Revelation to man. Not only so; no one like Him had never been seen before, nor has such been seen since. His main purpose, that of bringing people to God, had been dimly foreshadowed by Judaism, as had much of Christ's work; but apart from this, Christianity was something that had never existed in the world before the Incarnation.

It was thus almost entirely different from the

* See *Hebrews* VII, 14; VIII, 4.

effete religion it replaced; and there was no obvious reason for it merely to be another religion. As soon as it became one, it ceased to be unique. It is now treated, compared, and contrasted with all the false forms of worship in the world, under the heading of "comparative religion." As Professor Gwatkin pointed out, if all the others are religions, Christianity is not a religion. If Christianity is a religion there cannot be another one in the world. "If . . . the Gospel is a revelation of the eternal through the facts of time, it cannot be treated simply as one religion among others. . . . The application of comparative religion to the revelation itself is a fundamental error."* There can be no essential comparison between the one and only divine revelation and numerous other human, mythical, and superstitious cults.

As terms are only the symbols of realities, it may seem immaterial whether we regard Christianity as the only religion or as no religion; though one or the other it must be. As, however, the world is always full of religions, the former seems impossible; and the only way in which the due position of God's Revelation in His Son can be established is by returning to the place where we went wrong. There we shall find Christianity was a life and Judaism had been the true religion.

Elaborate organisations, forms, ceremonies, and pageantry, impose upon the simple, the emotional, and the neurotic, who are easily led and misled.

* *Early Church History*, I, 2-3.

Polytheism was of this kind. Christianity was totally different, and was suited for the manhood of mankind, when nursery toys have long ceased to charm and have been found useless for the real difficulties of life. Only spirituality can inspire to noble living.

We have glanced at the origin of Christianity, and have seen that God came down in the form of a working man; not, we must repeat, as a priest, which He could have been, but as a layman. In the course of the God-Man's ministry He ordained twelve, also working men like Himself. Not one apostle was a priest. The Redeemer completed His work by His atonement, resurrection and ascension; furthermore, by sending the Holy Spirit, who filled 120 working men and women, and began a great movement for turning people to God, for such was the purpose of Christianity. There is no record of priests being among the one hundred and twenty.

The Master, humanly speaking, was a sinless and learned working man, though He was also "Very God of Very God." St. Paul stands by himself, for on his head no hands were laid in ordination; he too was a layman and a scholar. His ability and zeal were prodigious. He did more than any other follower of Christ to extend Christianity. The new movement was a layman's effort throughout. It had no connection with the Jewish priesthood, except later in persecution; there was nothing ecclesiastical about it.

At the Last Supper a new significance may have been given to the Passover, but this is not certain. It "probably took place in the evening which

began the day Nisan 14th, and therefore was not the Passover meal proper which the Jews ate the next evening."* The original accounts are not quite clear that the Saviour intended the meal to be repeated. St. Paul thought this was the intention—for the purpose of remembering Christ; but " there are at least two early traditions as to the order of the meal: and . . . there is considerable doubt as to the exact words spoken by our Lord. In particular the question arises as to whether or not he expressly directed the repetition of what then took place. Scholars are agreed that the words 'Do this with a view to recalling Me' belong to the true text only in 1 Corinthians xi, 24, 25 . . . They are wanting in the three Synoptic Gospels."†

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* adds that Paul's interpretation " cannot be taken as current outside the sphere of Pauline influence "; that St. Paul makes no reference to any general practice in confirmation of his view; that the Synoptists record no command to repeat the supper and date it on the Passover night. " The *textus receptus* of Luke indeed includes the command, but the passage in which it occurs is an interpolation from the Pauline account; and whatever view be taken of the problem of the Lucan text, the command is no part of the original. The evidence, therefore, does not warrant the attribution to Jesus of the words " This do in remembrance of Me."‡

* *The Rise of the Christian Church*, 189. † *Ibid*, 195.
‡ *Enyclopædia Britannica:* Article, " Eucharist."

If we turn to the Fourth Gospel, we find no correspondence with the accounts of either Paul or the Synoptists. The Last Supper was on the previous day and was "not Pascal in character. The objections to the Synoptist chronology are insuperable. . . . The form of the tradition found in the Fourth Gospel is indubitably correct."*

The origin of the Sacrament is traced to an ordinary meal, partaken of by a group of friends. "To 'break bread' was the general expression for eating the meal. . . . The Last Supper . . . was, therefore, no unusual occurrence. . . . It is from this practice, rather than from any direct institution by Jesus, that the eucharist derives its origin."†

The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel has no reference to the supper, which our Lord never foretold until the day on which it was eaten, but to the crucifixion which He often foretold. "Read carefully and as a whole, John vi certainly suggests that, to the writer, feeding upon Christ is a bigger and wider thing than merely the receiving of the eucharistic bread and wine."‡

These facts are a test of our spiritual and intellectual liberty, the most precious heritage God ever gave to man except His Son; and how can we follow Him unless we receive and retain it?

The sacred meal was in fact repeated on the first day of each week, and this observance has

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Eucharist." † *Ibid.*
‡ *The Rise of the Christian Church*, 246.

never ceased, though it has been paganised. "The Eucharist, with its dramatic re-enactment of the Last Supper, itself a dramatic presentation of the Crucifixion," belongs "to that type of religious observance of which the 'Mystery Religions' give us other instances."* In its later elaborations it came very near to breaking an apostolic command; for "the Christian must not take part both in the sacred meal of the Christian society and also in a meal associated with a pagan cult."† The truth is at last emerging above the mists of error, and "the anachronism of trying to extract a theory of the Presence from a few words of Christ (themselves differently reported by different writers) is widely recognised."‡

The Holy Spirit filled others in addition to the 120, including Gentiles. Posterity was left with the injunction: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of *some* is" (our italics) and that was all.

There is the greatest significance in the large amount of liberty provided for Christians. No harm was done if all did not join the weekly assembly. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." No organisation, except "the Twelve," was given by divine command; though some ecclesiastical polity necessarily arose, in due course, for better order and discipline.

* *The Rise of the Christian Church*, 196. † *Ibid*, 192.
‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Eucharist."

The last command of our Lord was " Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature "; from which it is certain that this was more important than ecclesiastical administrations or sacraments. These had their place in the apostolic Church, but it was an inferior place to that occupied by the Gospel, as means to an end. The Saviour had little or nothing to do with either organisation or sacraments and gave no commands concerning them.

Where, in all this, is the establishment of a new religion? A society of believers in Christ was called into being, and for several years resembled that called Methodists in the eighteenth century. The latter possibly copied the apostolic Church in simplicity and spirituality. Both these bodies separated from, and became larger than, the parent society; and both parent societies were old ecclesiastical institutions.

The original conception of a Christian ecclesia, composed of all true believers, was good; and we shall hope to show that a corporate form was temporarily, if not permanently, necessary for the faith. Our present point is that, if the visible ecclesia became paganised, it became, by its paganisation, almost if not quite useless for its original purposes of bringing people to Christ and teaching them of Him. The salt thereby lost its distinctively Christian savour.

The emphasis in apostolic times was not on the corporate aspect of Christianity but on the spiritual needs of the individual sinner. That this emphasis

was subsequently reversed is no recommendation to Christianity, and no doubt is one reason for its apparent failure.

. . . . .

It is interesting and encouraging, after ploughing a lonely furrow for some years, to find that others have come to the same conclusion as oneself. There appear to be several, who have trodden independent paths from widely separated starting places, and yet have reached a rendezvous as if by some hidden guidance. Thus, in the summer of 1929 a paper was read at Cambridge by the Rev. Alfred Fawkes,* in which he said: "That our Lord neither founded nor intended to found anything resembling what we now spoke of as the Christian or Catholic Church was a conviction forced upon unbiased readers of the Gospels."

The Dean of Canterbury is another pilgrim who has arrived at the rendezvous, though he has a plan of reform in his pocket. He says: "It is difficult to believe that our Lord ever had any desire to authorise a hierarchy of men to define and curtail the boundaries of His religion, to Lord it over their brother men . . ."† The Dean is determined, however, to make the institutions really Christian, and he deserves well of them for his conviction. Would that he, or anyone, could do this! It is

* Vicar of Ashby St. Ledgers. The quotation is taken from *The Times*.

† *The Impatience of a Parson*, 72.

not a task lightly to be undertaken and must be left to

> "Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
> The weight of mightiest Monarchies."

We shall be content with more modest, and more practicable results. These, as far as we have now gone, may thus be summarised. That it be admitted:

1. That the Christian Institution turned aside from Christianity is a historical fact.
2. That Christianity was not intended to consist, exclusively or perhaps chiefly, in one or more great institutions.
3. That the original and divine conception of Christianity was that of a spiritual kingdom under the rule of God.
4. That the human and unauthorised forms of ecclesiastical polity which have arisen have not been sanctioned by undoubted divine blessing.

The objections to ecclesiastical autocracy need no comment; but from the practical viewpoint to-day, a constitutional episcopacy, balanced by a powerful presbytery and Christian electorate, may be a good form of Church Government. This is not our subject, yet it may be worth noting that the more democratic Church polities have not particularly distinguished themselves.

A glance at history shows the fundamental difference between our Lord's conception and Polytheism; also that Polytheism corrupted Christianity and handed down to us the prevailing

hybrid religions of Western Civilisation. Professor Gwatkin, with his usual discrimination, saw where the trouble lay, when he wrote: "The Lord came not to found a religion but to be Himself the revelation. Two simple rites excepted, we cannot trace to Him any ceremony of worship, or even any definite command to hold common worship at all."*

4. *Christians not Necessarily Religious.*—There is a most pertinent corollary to the fact that, while Christianity may be a religion it is also something more: *That Christians are not necessarily religious.*

A religious person is one who adores the services, and above all the sacraments, of a visible and audible Church, and who thinks that chapterhouses and cathedrals, priests, altars and all the other paraphernalia of at least one of the religions of the world are essential to salvation. A man may, as many do, know our Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and God, while positively hating all the pagan detritus that has accumulated around his faith. Would he not be a better, because a purer, Christian without all the heathen accessories than with them?

It is time that we realised what a different, if not indeed a totally different, conception godliness is from religion. The two are often actually independent of each other. Many of the most ungodly men who ever lived were highly religious, as seen in the Middle Ages, at the Renaissance, and in the Inquisition. Thousands of godly people

* *Early Church History*, I, 2.

to-day are wearied with institutional religion. The two conceptions are not merely separable; they represent two very different classes of people: the godly, some of whom are religious; and the religious, some of whom are godly. These two classes being sub-divided, the fundamental difference between them is usually lost.

This does not appear to be a matter of opinion but of fact; for pure Christianity appeals to the complete personality: body, mind, and spirit; while the religious faculty is no more than the response to a partial appeal, and most people, by hypothesis, are devoid of it. "A philosophy might touch reason, a religion feeling, a law action; *but none of them would appeal to human nature as a whole.*"*

Unless the soul is in communion with its God the all-important element is lacking; if it is, nothing can add to it or be added to it. Much can be taken from it, and religious ceremonies, which are assumed to help the feeble, are a hindrance to the spiritually strong. Communion with God is not emotional or æsthetic, beyond the sense in which nature will lead her lover to her God. It may be ages, however, before the mass of mankind will enter the invisible shrine of the mystic.

Godliness, rather than religion is the need of men; and much of our religion, because of its pagan composition, keeps people away from God. It misleads many into supposing that they are worshipping God when their emotions are merely

* Gwatkin: *Knowledge of God*, I, 207 (our italics).

excited by art. The present trend away from our cultured Christianity shows that the institutional variety, at least, is not wanted by the majority. There is small demand for it. We all need God, whether we are awake to the realisation of this or not; and we shall never find either rest or the highest activity apart from Him.

Undue confidence about the progress of mankind is dangerous; but if the race does improve it must be a movement towards the spiritual. In this event there would be little use for the present *forms* of Christianity. The true faith has been clothed in garments, some of which were in tatters before our Saviour came, and others were stripped off the heathen gods and goddesses. Such raiment must become of merely antiquarian interest.

Time brings changes in every kind of fashion. The vestures that clothe the religious sentiments of one age are often looked upon with positive aversion by succeeding generations. The verbal expressions indulged in by the writers of early Victorian books of family prayer now seem to us the most threadbare apparel; though we should, perhaps, condemn ourselves if we were in entire disagreement with the spirit beneath them.

Confirmed institutionalists are forced to defend their own church clothes; others may be indifferent about them, and some they annoy. Beneath all outward forms there should be substance, and this is the vital element. If we turn backward to the pure source of Christianity we find substance,

indeed, and it is scantily attired. There is no future for ecclesiastical drapery. If the very material universe is regarded by God as mere clothing for the spirit, how much more our Græco-Roman habiliments? "They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."*

* Hebrews i, 11-12.

CHAPTER IX

SOME REASONS FOR THE DECLINE

" Then comes a new revelation and a great simplifying. They want to live face to face with God without a screen of ritual and images and priestcraft. They want to prune life of its foolish fringes."

JOHN BUCHAN: "GREENMANTLE"

1. REASONS SPIRITUAL AND MORAL. 2. INTELLECTUAL AND DOCTRINAL. 3. INSTITUTIONAL, SACERDOTAL AND CULTURAL. 4. SOCIAL AND OTHER REASONS.

1. WE HAVE made an attempt to find out for ourselves the main facts bearing on Institutional Christianity. We have seen that the Latin Church, which tried to dominate the world after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, was very different from original Christianity, mainly because it installed Greek ritual and Roman institutionalism as integral parts of the Church. We saw that pure Christianity was independent of outward observances, and antagonistic to pagan practices, whether imported into the religion or not. We have glanced at crucial points in Church history and have seen that the institutional forms are not the whole of Christianity. Having seen also that Christianity is more than a religion, we should be

Photograph: W. F. Mansell

INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY, II

THE EXHUMATION OF ST. HUBERT

in a position to consider the reason or reasons for the present failure of the institutions.

No attempt will be made to mention every reason for the decline. The wireless religious services, for example, undoubtedly reduce our congregations to less than they were before; but it is not obvious that anything can be done about it, and this does not touch the root of the matter. Let us briefly review the spiritual and moral, intellectual, institutional, and social reasons for the diminishing of our Churches.

Two methods have been in use, from quite early days, for continuing the existence of Institutional Christianity. We will term them the institutional and the Christian methods, both being frequently practised by the same institution. According to the institutional method, people are baptised and confirmed, for example, and thus made full members of one of the Churches. They are then admitted to Holy Communion and all the other benefits of their Church. By the Christian method, unbelievers in Christ are led to their Saviour and are converted or born of God's Spirit. This was the method practised by the Apostolic Church, and it was God's own way of salvation. The sacraments also were in early use, not as means of salvation, but as consequences of it.

The institutional method alone cannot maintain Christianity, and the Christian method alone may or may not maintain institutions. The practice of the two methods appears to have been unobjection-

able; but only while Christianity dominated institutionalism, and this was not for very long.

During the greater part of the period since apostolic times the institutional method has prevailed, though the Christian method has co-existed as its humble handmaiden. Protestantism depends on the reverse of this, for it cannot compete in institutionalism with Romanism. The true life of Protestantism is that of Christ, and thus three courses are open to it; for unless it increases the number of those who believe in Him, it must either adopt the institutional method or perish.

Most of the professedly Protestant Churches have been depending recently on this institutional aggregation to maintain their numbers. The Gospel of salvation has been preached less and less, until in most pulpits it is now obsolete, or at least obsolescent. Evangelistic propaganda have gone out of fashion and Protestant parsons seldom lead anyone to Christ, though this was, and should be yet, the principal function of the Churches. Thousands of parsons never do such a thing now. Sometimes the reason for this omission is that they have had no spiritual experience themselves. As Christians pass over into Life there are few converts to take their places, and Church membership is kept up largely, if not mainly, by lowering the standard and admitting the unconverted—not that they could ever be kept out altogether.

This is clearly the one sufficient cause of the decline. The Protestant Churches are ceasing to

propagate the Christian species. It is possible to prolong the existence of any institution by mechanical means; but this is not Christianity, which is organic. Spiritual sterility is the root of the trouble; it has many contributory causes, some of which we hope to mention. There is an allied reason, however, for many empty pews, that we must first refer to.

The natural man's aversion to spiritual things must be the fundamental cause of the decline we deplore, but it cannot be the sole cause as it leaves a great deal unaccounted for. The spiritual man often has a greater aversion than the natural man to the existing forms of religion. Many real Christians, all over the country, have been driven, in loyalty to Christ, to sever themselves from the Christian institutions. In the opinion of the seceders, and often correctly, their Church has lost its Christian savour and ceased to be the home of the soul.

This is a serious matter. The large number of these seceders does not appear to have been realised. No statistics relating to them exist, but they account for many empty pews and even churches. Various misdemeanours have precipitated the severance; though we are concerned, in this Section, only with the depression of the spiritual level. This is not often due to the ministry. Non-Christian adherents, who are members of the institution without being members of Christ, are de-spiritualising many churches. Their influence promotes, by almost

imperceptible stages, unscriptural changes and innovations; and the cumulative effect of these changes is disastrous. Some local churches are now little more than nominally Christian; they have lost their distinctive savour, and with it their most spiritually-minded supporters.

The one reason for people not now going to church given by Mr. Lippmann is that "they are not so certain that they are going to meet God."* This is profoundly true. Of the changes implied by this we need not write, except to say that the old belief, the "ignorant worship," was that God's Presence would be found in consecrated, but not in unconsecrated, buildings; that in the opinion of many the architecture of these buildings must be Gothic; and that God could not be worshipped elsewhere. Our Lord's revelation had made all this mere superstition. Hence, ceasing to attend church may be part of a true spiritual evolution, if it results from the knowledge that we can meet God anywhere and we commune with Him on the hills and by the sea.

2. *Intellectual.*—Between the spiritual and intellectual planes we catch our first glimpse of modernity,† which is allied to both. Its basis is liberty, but it should have been instruction or education, for then liberty would not be misused.

* *Preface to Morals*, 48.

† The term "Modernism" is now completely absorbed by a theological school.

Masses of unenlightened people, with freedom to do what they will, are like children with dangerous weapons. The only dangers that now concern us are intellectual; the social effects of emancipation will follow.

One of the outstanding features of modernity is the frank questioning of everything. The effect of this depends on the qualifications of the questioner; if they are inadequate, criticism is a torch for burning; if adequate, a hammer for building. In other words, this freedom is hopeful to the extent that it is balanced by moral purpose and guided by knowledge.

The Great War struck Institutional Christianity one of the most destructive blows it ever received, and from which it has not yet recovered. Whether it will eventually recover is hypothetical. Millions of Christian people wondered how God could permit such wickedness as the war let loose upon the world; and many, since the war, have tacitly blamed Him for man's sin, and in despair of a solution have thrown over all religion. We cannot enter into such problems here, though they are not quite insoluble on the Christian basis. The facts alone concern us, and a short reply to this difficulty has already been given.*

An increasing number of people are now getting the little knowledge that is dangerous, but many still look for direction to those who are better informed. Here is one direct reason for the decline

* Page 97.

in Institutional Christianity. An intelligent working man told the writer: "You parsons cannot agree among yourselves." The people have been accustomed to receive instruction from their parson, who in the past was a teacher they trusted. This trust in him is becoming impaired. They now read the opinions of other teachers, and find them in disagreement with what they have been taught. They even find that accredited authorities flatly contradict each other; and the result is that most people dare not believe anything.

Many congregations were taught, until recently, that salvation was by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ "and not for our own works or deservings."* This is now obsolescent, and if any salvation is preached it is usually that of social service or sacrament, though salvation by neither of these is Christian. A change of minister frequently entails a complete change of doctrine. Evangelicals are succeeded by Anglo-Catholics and both by Modernists. Few worshippers can judge the relative merits, or express the juice of truth from each, of the various schools of thought; so the only course for the majority is to believe none of them. Why then go to church? Their position is that their trust in their spiritual advisers has been destroyed; they have therefore lost all interest in religion. One parson, who was not a strong partisan, was told by a member of a large congregation, to which he had ministered for some months, that he seemed

* Article XI.

to think they had been taught all wrong for the previous forty years; and before God he did!

Biblical criticism has led to clerical scepticism, and this directly to empty pews. If comprehensive inquiries are made it will be found that churchgoing is declining largely because so few Christian ministers now believe in their Bibles. The Anglo-Catholic attempt to transfer the allegiance of the English people back from the Bible to their conception of the Church has met with the peculiar "success" that ninety per cent of the population now absent themselves from all public worship. Whether the Church in their minds was Rome or otherwise has not made much difference, for Rome has, in fact, gained while Institutional Protestantism has lost. Clerical scepticism has ably supported religious controversy in driving Christians out of their churches.

The public, or any large masses of humanity, cannot be expected to show fine discrimination, and they are beginning to think that the Bible is now discredited. Many are certain that the visible Churches are. What have they left? They judge the Churches directly by their own moral standards; but the Bible they have more respect for and judge it mainly through learned men and societies which are supposed to understand such high matters. The general impression created during recent years has been that modern science has shown the Scriptures to be, at least in part, untrustworthy. The natural man has often felt hurt by the plain

speech of the Bible. As long as he believed it to be the Word of God he would not always rebel against this, but he is secretly rather glad to be rid of this annoyance.

As for "the Church," few have the capacity for seeing the Church of Christ. A number of warring sects, on the contrary, are well within the vision and understanding of the masses. In addition to which, there is scandal aplenty connected with religion that gives them a false impression of it. They read practically nothing except their newspapers, and they hear their womenfolk talk about what goes on, and still more about what is said to go on, at the churches and their schools.

In this legacy of evil there is one codicil of good. The Bible and "the Church" have been, not merely ignorantly but idolatrously, worshipped by a large number of devotees. These idolatries are largely dying out. The worship of The Book has not been followed by evil consequences because the Bible most certainly testifies faithfully for God. The so-called "Church" that is idolised is a dangerous false god, because it is a figment of the imagination, and the only reality with which it can correspond is a constellation of ecclesiastical institutions, some of which have not even kept the faith.

To cease attending church, therefore, if it has been worshipped instead of God, may be positive spiritual progress; and the present state of things, much as institutionalists deplore it, may be part of a higher evolution.

There is evidence that the Christian institutions have been drifting into an intellectual backwater; and this is one of the weightiest reasons for the decline in formal Christianity. We will term it *the divorce of the Churches from the advancement of knowledge.*

This has been their traditional policy from early days, but it seems singularly unfortunate. It led, in part, to the Dark Ages; and it is leading many traditionalists now towards another dark age. The early Church in banning all secular knowledge did not appear to represent correctly the teaching of our Lord, which is as satisfying to the more intellectual modern Christian mind as it was to the majority of people who believed, in apostolic times; it suffices for both learned and simple. His teaching did not, of course, consist in book-knowledge; but in a fuller wisdom derived from experience of human life, of nature generally, and above all, of God.

The education of Christian ministers differs from this almost entirely. It is excessively narrow, while Christ's teaching was most comprehensive. Book-knowledge alone is now required, taught, and examined. Even this is usually restricted to theology and literature, which are theoretical and mental—not practical and actual—acquaintance with God and man. Nearly the whole realm of nature, of almost the greatest value to mankind generally, is omitted from the curriculum. Of even

greater importance is experience of life, human and divine, which is totally excluded by the institutions, though occasionally included by individual members of them.

The inevitable result of this is a widening breach between the outlook on life of parsons and people. If the present positions were reversed, as they were in past centuries when the clergy had the wider intellectual outlook (narrow as it was), the situation would not be hopeless; but the educated laity can see the whole ambit of the average clerical mind, no very difficult matter; while the clergy, for the most part, are blind to the wider vision of the laity.

The apathy towards the Churches is partly due to the exclusion of many clergy from experience of life and the progress of thought. As to the former, business is more valuable than a college training, in preparation for the ministry, while the usual attitude of Christian ministers to the results of modern research is that of opposition, springing from fear of the unknown. The popular conceptions of scientific advancement, among the less-educated classes, are crude enough to be easily rebuked, but the clergy cannot see that they are twisting a lion's tail.

The power over men that, in the days of general ignorance, was wielded by religion is now in the firmer grasp of science, though the clergy cannot realise this. Attempts have been made at clerical meetings to get fundamentals discussed, but without

success. Yet the greatest need to-day is for solid work on the frontier of nature and revelation: to

> "Assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men."

3. *Institutional Reasons.*—No widespread antagonism to Christianity is apparent in England, and its moral principles still prevail; but there is much in its external forms that makes no appeal to the genius of the English, and there is much that repels them. The principal repulsive elements seem to be three: first, Sacerdotalism; second, the exotic Mediterranean atmosphere that is permeating public worship; and third, the institutionalism of the greater Churches, which often appears to be as stupid as a Government department.

Something has already been said on these points, so there is less to be added here; but before passing on we must notice that the revulsion of many individuals from corporate bodies is by no means a frivolous objection.

W. E. H. Lecky pointed out that no institution could continue to exist if it placed abstract truth before practical expediency. This is due to the nature of men and things, and is inevitable. Even learned societies are no exception to this law. Splendid as their achievements are, they are not infallible guides to scientific truth, as a recent example will show.

The leading geographical societies and universities admitted Admiral Peary's claim to have reached

the North Pole, and showered their honours upon him for his success, with no more than the most cursory glance at copies of some of his records. Now that all his records have been thoroughly examined it is clear that his claim was unfounded.

Persistent purity of principle is impractical in institutions. From this it follows that while the Churches may, or may not, be repositories of Christian truth, they cannot propagate it consistently without endangering their own existence. Hence, seekers after truth must turn elsewhere for the satisfaction of their souls.

It is true that a Church's *doctrine* may not go far astray, for " the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," but its precept is not always sanctioned by its practice. " Whatsoever therefore they say unto you, do; but do not according to their works, for they say but do not." Men have become members of the Church of England believing that the Thirty-nine Articles were this Church's Confession of Faith, and were not pleased to find they had been deceived. The Reservation of the Sacrament is illegal; but it is necessary, or so it is alleged, to violate this law for the maintenance of discipline or the prevention of further indiscipline.

Some Christian institutions copy the bureaucratic methods of the State. Whether such methods increase efficiency is not our present concern; the government departments, perhaps, should be the administrators of the laws made by Parliament. It does concern us to notice the general outcry against these methods,

voiced by no less a man than the Lord Chief Justice.* The unpopularity of bureaucracy in ecclesiastical institutions has a disintegrating effect: there is too much interference with personal liberty, without consent; a large number of people leave the institutions because they can endure no more annoyance. The trouble seems to be that the system is mechanistic, though we cannot pursue the matter much further.

The recent centralisation of the Church of England, for example, might have been excellent had Church members been consulted on the proposed reforms before they were enforced, and if it were possible for the clergy to keep in touch with the majority of their parishioners. As, however, these reforms were autocratically or bureaucratically imposed, and as it is becoming more and more impracticable for ministers to learn the opinion of the people,† the mass of them are getting out of all relationship to the institution, which grinds along, meanwhile, its mechanistic way.

Such a system, without the human touch, must tend to become mechanical; and this kind of mechanism attracts very few. The masses still bring their babies to be baptised, though there are thousands less every year; but not half of them are ever confirmed, and it is impossible to prevent the lapse of a very large proportion of the confirmees. If they all became Christians there

* See *The New Despotism* by Lord Hewart (Benn, 1929).
† See Appendix IV.

would still be an actual falling away. Many of the confirmees, alas, never become more than *professing* Christians.

The first institutional objection mentioned was sacerdotalism, and to this we must now turn our attention.

The Dean of Winchester says that the Reformation "changed the history of the world" as the result of four main features: "The intellectual reaction against mediævalism . . . the moral reaction against clerical abuses . . . the political revolt against Rome," and "a distinctly anti-sacerdotal movement."*

Some of these features became permanent, and they have had much influence in an anti-institutional direction. They are mainly anti-sacerdotal, and as such they exist to-day. The depth of this feeling is apparently unknown to most of the clergy, for they show little evidence of having observed it.

If God's servants were unpopular only on account of faithfulness to their Master in a naughty world there would be little more to say on this part of the subject. Unfortunately this has not been the main historical fact. It has never been possible, since the time of Judas Iscariot, totally to exclude false priests from the ministry; and they have given it a bad name. The clergy seemed to have been unpopular before the Reformation, and they are far from being as popular now as they suppose. People are more polite, and many clergy are

* *Outline of Christianity*, II, 383.

deservedly popular; but a definite anti-clerical feeling exists, as seen in the greatest compliment that the laity can pay to any Christian minister: "He is not a bit like a parson."

There are many reasons for this, and they all have some effect in keeping people away from church, for it is personality that pulls. The clergy, with many individual exceptions, live in a world apart from the laity. This clerical world is not merely unattractive, it is actually repulsive to many, and probably to most people. Its outward appearance is very much against it. The parsonage is too frequently untidy and neglected both within and without. While it is usual for the laity now to take some commendable pride in their homes and their personal appearance, most parsonages and their inmates are slovenly and unkempt. This is not entirely due to poverty, and it has a bad effect.

A more widespread offence has been religious strife, most of which has occurred over ritual and similar matters. The recent decline in Christian worship may be dated from the illegalities that succeeded the Oxford Movement. The bitterness of the controversy filled people with sheer disgust.

The Oxford Movement broke out during a period when nearly everyone went to some place of worship; and very few people were kept away from church by it for some years. By the time of the census of 1921 its effect, and that of the religious strife it caused, were seen.

Most worshippers will endure an amazing number of objectionable practices before leaving their churches; but even worms, it is said, will turn. Congregations all over the country have been affected by the Romeward drift, by the animosities created by it, and by the want of consideration shown them by some of their ministers.

In process of time other, and frequently more feeble-minded, congregations have taken the place of the old. The common complaint has been, as expressed to the writer: "This sort of thing may be all right for the women and children, but men won't stand it." Those who left their churches felt, and quite justly, that they had been driven out. They became centres of disaffection, and made sure that all whom they could influence either went the way they considered right or left all religion alone.

The latter course has prevailed, very largely because moderate parsons have been too scarce, but also for another reason. People will leave Nonconformity for Anglicanism, low church for high church, and Anglicanism for Romanism; but beyond this "The force of nature can no further go," and all is vacuity. Many have now reached this empty space. Rome leads nowhere in religion, but frequently to agnosticism. People have admitted that they could put up with Græco-Romanism no longer and now rejoiced in their liberty from all religion. It is no light matter to drive people from their churches. Very few of them settle down to

other places of worship, and they have a profound grievance that has a widespread effect. Sacerdotalism has not been the only cause of exile, though it has applied to hundreds and perhaps thousands of churches, of which one or two examples must stand for many.

At Burford, in Oxfordshire, some years ago, there was a faithful Church of England minister who had a certain notoriety because he admitted his communicants by ticket. He was succeeded by a ritualist who drove the whole ecclesia out, and the seceders formed a new body which still exists. A similar event took place, within the writer's recollection, near Birmingham. Here a number of keen young Christians were forced to leave their parish church, and they founded a mission, which has been doing excellent work for many years.

Dr. Foakes Jackson writes that men now "question the right of the clergy to the authority they assume."* They certainly do, and with very good reason. The laity, God bless them, are revelling in their freedom from clerical control; and further, they would be much more capable of controlling the clergy than the clergy them. Indeed, if all clergy could be put under the tutelage of the Christian laity an immense improvement would be the result. As things are, the clergy are more frequently ignored; they stand for Institutional Christianity, and if they fall the Churches fall with them.

Most laymen inherit a profound revulsion from

* *Outline of Christianity*, II, 238.

clerical domination. They have as much time for study as the clergy, and some of them are better informed than those who should be their teachers. Thus fewer people every year look to their parsons for guidance on religious or other matters. The knowledge of God exists to a large, if an unknown, extent outside the Churches; and judging from the utterances of churchpeople it does not exist within them to the extent that it should. There is no great difference, in this, between institutionalists and others. There seems, therefore, little purpose in the laity troubling themselves about the Churches.

Dr. de Pressensé has pointed out in a brilliant article that the most serious change ever made in Christianity was its imposition by authority, "for it is before everything the religion of the spirit and of liberty." This change began approximately in the Fourth Century, when the Church had diverged from its primitive type into a new theocracy, and Christian liberty was lost until the Reformation. Then began "a gigantic struggle, on the one hand between the Reformation and the ancient Catholic Church whose usurpations linked with a mercenary conception of salvation were consented to by the Council of Trent; and on the other hand, between Christianity and a pagan culture eager to resuscitate the materialism of the ancient world. . . . This double struggle has reached in our day its culminating height." There are now within the fortress enemies of Christianity that once beset its walls,

" tendencies which are Christian only in name " while really anti-Christian.

One of these enemies is a neo-Paganism and the other a Judaising tendency. The latter is now inexplicable because " the institutions proper to the Old Covenant have no longer any reason for their existence since they have found their accomplishment in the gospel." This anti-Christianity " breaks with all modern progress from a social point of view by its attempt to enchain thought and the conscience to a sacerdotal power. Wherever Catholicism is the dominant religion it is taken as the true representative of Christianity itself. Hence is propagated the erroneous idea that there is an opposition between the religion of Christ and social progress. . . . We are thus right in affirming that *the victory of the Catholic theocracy has been the surest means of actually turning away recent generations from a Christianity ill understood and misrepresented*, and that it has in this way facilitated the progress of anti-Christianity."*

. . . . .

The last objection to Institutional Christianity with which we have to deal in this section is that of the contemporary ornamental, or other, culture which has flooded our Churches; this may or may not be art, but whichever it is, it has little or nothing to do with Christianity properly so called. It has a

* Article, "Christianity," Edmond de Pressensé, D.D., in *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, 1906 (our italics).

certain fascination for the immature, but it is an affront to the adult intelligence. Strictly speaking there can be no Christian art, for Christianity is essentially spirit; and when it was pure it had no recognised art. The term, of course, must remain; but it should be understood that the word "Christian" is here used loosely, as in the term "Christian country."

We cannot enter here into the considerable subject of the relationship of culture to Christianity in general. It is enough for us to observe that the species of art which adorn public worship were mainly of pagan origin, and have failed to attract more than a small fraction of the people. The reason for this, apart from its non-Christian character is not far to seek.

Some women, children, and æsthetes, are thrilled by processions, lights, colours, pictures, music, posturing and ceremonial. What most real men think about them would be unprintable! Nor are such men mere "philistines." They may have a well-cultivated appreciation for art, also for Christianity; but they believe that most mixtures are bad, and they despise effeminacy, especially in religion.

The effeminate and the childish have driven English manhood from our sanctuaries. The nature of most men revolts, as it should, against the sensuous, which they know is not good for them; and they feel that much of this artistic atmosphere is merely emotional and petty.

The greatest religious event in England since 1851 has been the rise of Anglo-Catholicism, and with it this Græco-Roman atmosphere. It has permeated the Church of England, where it is now among the clergy, though not among the laity, the most numerous sect. It is remarkable that its rise should be contemporary with a serious decline in public worship; and the only explanation seems to be that a form of ecclesiasticism based on institutionalism, consisting mainly of sacramentarianism and graced by æstheticism, is not popular. Even Dr. Dearmer writes: "Notwithstanding the Catholic Revival, the English people become steadily less ecclesiastical."*

It must be made clear that no attack is here made on high churchism, or any other sectional interest. "Honour to whom honour is due." Some of the finest of our clergy are of this party. They are frequently examples of much, very much, that all Christian ministers ought to be; and some of them both preach God's Truth and practise it in their daily lives. This being so, it is the greater pity that they are content with a form of Christianity that consists to such a considerable extent of non-Christian elements. There seems little to choose, from the Christian standpoint, between the three main schools of thought; the Liberal, the Anglo-Catholic or the Evangelical.

4. *Social and Other Reasons.*—Common-sense people say that large numbers do not go to church now

* *Outline of Christianity*, III, 183.

"because they do not want to go"; but this simply leads to the question, "Why do they not want to go now?" They and their fathers went a few years ago. To what extent did they go against their will?

Most of those who remember the Victorian Sunday will doubtless reply to this last question: "To a very large extent." The Sabbath, as this day was incorrectly named,* was then observed in a manner that we now regard with horror. Sir Richard Burton has left the best description of it that occurs to the mind at the moment:

> "They eat and drink, they sleep and nod,
> They go to church on Sunday;
> And many are afraid of God,
> And more of Mrs. Grundy."

The results of this were serious for the Churches. Young people were wearied with religion and have reacted from it ever since. They have not yet turned away from Christian morality to the same extent.

These backsliders doubtless speak the truth when they tell us that we must not think they are atheists because they do not now attend church. Most of them have never given up Christianity; but they are left to their own spiritual resources, and these are not very extensive. True Christianity is still to be found among the institutions, but the people are not now interested in them. Why have they lost their interest?

* Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is the Sabbath or Jewish Holy Day. The Christian Day is the first or Lord's Day.

Several reasons for this have just been suggested and there is not much to add. Motoring and golfing on Sundays are not reasons, they are excuses, for absence from church. There may, indeed, be as good natural reasons for Sunday sports as there are spiritual reasons against them; and the greater pressure of business to-day takes its toll from public worship. So also does the change in social habits already referred to; but most of these things are the effects of deeper causes.

There has been a great change in the outlook upon life of the people as a whole in the last few generations. The new outlook may, perhaps, be described as ultra-Romantic. It is a restless and not a very satisfactory spirit, though it is not without compensating qualities. There is much less stability, if more general intelligence, than there was in Victorian times; and one vogue has entered, the desire to be amused, in a manner unknown before. This new outlook, as a whole, is unfavourable to the spiritual life; and though the Churches do not cater much for true spiritual education, they are feeling its effects.

Another new and important factor has been the increase in the population, which the Churches have not been able to keep pace with. The natural development of human life has outstripped spiritual growth. This lies at the doors of the Churches, because their present condition may be accounted for by natural law, and they profess higher powers. If they had possessed them their membership would

have increased faster than the population. To have grown at the same rate would not have been unusual; but nature has left Institutional Christianity far behind.

If we keep closely to the actual facts we shall see, perhaps, that the decline in Church membership and attendance at public worship show the failure of *Institutional* Christianity, while leaving Christianity itself almost unimpaired. It is true that Christianity is commonly supposed to consist only of the Churches, and that they claim to be its representatives and witnesses. They are still such, though not exclusively. A glance at history helps us to understand their present failure and the actual facts.

A corporate body or institution of some kind may have been necessary when the people were uneducated; and it still appeals to all who need a religion, and who want it like some of their clothes, ready made. Most of these have no discernment, and accept, like good children, whatever Mother Church gives them. Their usual proviso is that the the ceremonial they adore, be it simple or ornate, shall never be altered. It is a pity that their devotion is so often lavished upon alleged intermediaries between God and man, instead of upon their Saviour.

The days of institutional autocracy are numbered as soon as people begin to think for themselves; for no institution can be elastic enough to meet the universal needs of mind and spirit. Some more satisfactory system might be devised, perhaps, with

a minimum of fixed parts and a maximum of liberty; but the freedom of speech indulged in by some of the smaller religious bodies is not encouraging. The biggest bore is frequently the greatest talker, and empties the room.

Institutional Christianity is failing partly because it is legal. Legalism is two thousand years out of date, having been abrogated by our Lord. Our present legalism is in part Hebrew and in part derived from Pagan Rome; it may have been excellent for the State but it is subversive of true Christianity.

Our local ceremonial, whether simple or ornate, is rigidly fixed and may not be varied. The pundits of each sacred place watch jealously for change, and the threat of their wrath keeps everything in an order that goes back to the ritual of Ancient Greece. Thinking people cannot endure much of this, knowing that they could spend their Sundays more profitably with their books. Sermons on sacraments have no attraction for them. They are not superstitious, nor do they happen to be idolaters; and they may have had experiences that will not be forgotten.

A few years ago a bishop was presiding over a mass meeting of men. The speakers gradually worked up enthusiasm until one of them, a clergyman, cried out: "That the men of England may be gathered around *the Holy Communion!*" There was a tumult of applause; the bishop beamed; and two young parsons, shocked, saddened and dis-

gusted, left the hall as a protest against twentieth century idolatry.

This resurgence of heathenism in Christian institutions has at least one serious objection: it arrests spiritual development. Devotees are usually found to be profoundly ignorant of Christian truth. They have a species of natural religion, and some of them have advanced as far as Judaism. A few are Christians. Yet Churches, naturally, are conducted for the benefit of their best supporters. It is a peculiar situation, with no easy way out of it.

Of one conclusion, however, we may now be certain: that the day of external human authority over the individual is past. The decline in the number of our Church members and attenders is the handwriting on the wall that the Christian Institutions have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. They were once the home of the soul. Now they tend to worry it; but now there is peace outside them. There is little peace within their borders. They are full of petty jealousies and foolish gossip—not because they are Christian institutions, but because the people who largely support them could not agree among themselves anywhere. This is a well-known fact of experience. It is not, of course, the whole truth, for which we have no space; but it is a practical reason for the falling away.

The only purpose that can justify the existence of the Christian Church is that of bringing people to Christ and teaching them the will of God.

Whatever interferes with this is evil, and whatever aids it, evil only excepted, is good. The pagan conception of an autocratic institution, drawn from the Roman Empire, has usurped the place of God. People are made members of the institution and told they are then members of Christ. The institution is not Christ, as its history proves. It can only now be one of many similar institutions. The professions and claims of these institutions are now being questioned; and anyone to whom the facts are known can judge of their validity.

The hollowness of these pretensions is having its effect in emptying the churches. The right of private judgment, won at the Reformation, is now generally exercised. Most people are not intellectually qualified to judge the Churches, for they are moved more by impulse and emotion than by knowledge and logic; but if they get one rooted idea in their minds they are liable to act on it, and they have seen enough of the Churches to form a fair opinion of them.

Intense activity is aroused within the Christian Institution by any suggestion of *institutional* change, but most of them appear to be in a state of *spiritual* decadence. We see it in the wrangling over particular forms of ecclesiastical polity, while all forms are falling and nine-tenths of our people want no ecclesiasticism of any kind.

Canon Streeter has recently shown that no type of ecclesiastical polity, episcopal, presbyterian, or independent, can claim the sole authority of the

Apostolic Church.* The decline of Institutional Christianity is due, in part, to the side-tracks of sectarianism, instead of keeping first things first and whole-heartedly caring for the spiritual kingdom of God. The kind of vehicle in which the Gospel should be carried is of slight importance compared with the need of humanity for the Saviour. Relatively little interest has been taken in " Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad."

The flock has strayed largely because a sense of unreality is paralysing the institutions. It has been widely observed that while true Christians lead the best of lives, they do not always go to church; and that churchgoers as a class are little better than others. Why then go? There is no very obvious reason.

The time has come to acknowledge that the Churches are not the whole of Christianity. These institutions have done good work, and may have been essential, as nursing mothers, to the infancy of the faith. But if we look ahead we should see that nursemaids and pedagogues cannot be allowed to arrest the natural and spiritual development of full Christian manhood.

* *The Primitive Church*, 1929.

CHAPTER X

FROM A SCIENTIFIC VIEWPOINT

"*Because science is truly a revelation, it has beaten the dwarfed and distorted religions of authority from position to position like a routed army. It has forced us to drop our puny theories, and face the glory of truth.*"

PROFESSOR GWATKIN:—"THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD."

1. THE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE. 2. ECCLESIASTICAL MATERNITY. 3. A SUGGESTION.

1. OUR POINT of view in this chapter will not be strictly scientific in the technical meaning of the word, but in accordance with the more popular position assumed throughout this book; nor is there any intention of entering the borderland between science and religion, which is a dangerous country where only picked troops can operate with safety. Others, from both sides, often get lost there. The purpose of this chapter is threefold: 1. To notice that the present scientific attitude towards life should mightily concern, and may be a great advantage to, Christianity. 2. To glance at Christian Institutionalism in the dispassionate manner of a scientist examining a specimen; and 3. To make a suggestion.

Two great influences now contend for the suffrages of mankind. One of these is worthily represented by the historic institutions of Christianity which, in varying degrees, seek to impose the external authority of tradition. The other influence is the spirit of truth within the individual: the spirit that questions all things and refuses to accept anything on the mere authority of men or institutions. Neither influence is specifically or entirely Christian, though the institutions bear the name and profess the principles of Christianity. Both these influences, from the Christian standpoint, have dangers; but the influence that we may term scientific alone looks to the future, hence the mottoes on our title page.

The spirit of the Christian Institutions has always been predominantly conservative. Conservation of all goodness is necessary and of course beneficial, but ancient institutions go beyond this and tend to worship tradition for tradition's sake. Hence it is difficult for institutionalists to understand that there is at least one other great principle, more important than any tradition, the acceptance of truth, which may conflict with their tradition and possibly destroy it, except in so far as it also is truth.

Many years must be spent in acquiring the scientific outlook on life, without which the whole revelation of God in Nature is a closed book. The Churches are now awakening to this and seem in no danger of repeating the kind of mistake made in

Galileo's day, though they still retain a large measure of obscurantism. A rift is widening within them between these conflicting influences, and it is part of a greater movement, or the transition from traditionalism to truth.

The crude fact is that religion has been dethroned and science rules in its stead. Whether this implies true progress towards the ideal depends upon what the religion was and what the reigning science now is. We have considered the former and are now to glance at the latter. Institutional Christianity possibly would have retained its sovereignty had not it consisted to such a large extent in a form of godliness which denied the power thereof.

The reign of science has already given us a secure, in the place of an insecure, basis of knowledge; though its approach is from a different direction to that of religion. The basis during the ecclesiastical regime was nominally faith, but in practice superstition. The pursuit of truth has now been substituted for this; not only what has hitherto been termed material truth, but spiritual truth also.

Professor Eddington has placed us under a debt of gratitude for his new classification of these things. He has recently shown that "the division of the external world into a material world and a spiritual world is superficial, and that the deep line of cleavage is between the metrical and the non-metrical aspects of the world."* The metrical

* *Science, Religion and Reality*, 200.

sciences, which until recently tended to dominate thought, formed a closed system which excluded personality, or free-will, not only human but divine.

Personality exists and cannot be excluded from our philosophy. "Recent tendencies of scientific thought lead to the belief that mind is a greater instrument than was formerly recognised in prescribing the nature and laws of the external world. . . . By its selection of values the mind may indeed be said to have created its physical environment. We have spelt mind with a small 'm,' for our values are human values; yet we trust there is even in us something that has value for the eternal. Perhaps the actuality of the world is not only in these little sparks from the divine mind which flicker for a few years and are gone, but in the Mind, the Logos. 'The same was in the beginning with God. . . . And without Him was not anything made that was made.'"*

We cannot now pursue these generalisations further. We must be content with a few examples showing the trend of modern thought; and traditionalists are asked to believe that we shall not err if we examine the problem at a considerable angle from theirs.

Mr. Fowler Wright has spoken of "the type of mind that instinctively disentangles the teaching of Christ from the accretions of the centuries which have obscured and degraded it."† This type of mentality, being analytical, may be termed the

* *Science, Religion, and Reality*, 217. † "Deluge."

scientific mind, and it is one of the most significant signs in the modern world. The present writer would substitute the term "pure Christianity" for the above words "teaching of Christ."

The segregation of Christianity from its accretions is a simple and essential analysis. Institutional Christianity is a mixture of fundamentally incongruous elements, some of which have adhered to the original faith as it has passed down the centuries. It needs to be resolved into its component parts before it can be understood or dealt with. Little use can be made of it as it is, from the Christian standpoint, though more from that of a Hellenist; for Hellenism and Christianity are its principal elements, but the former preponderates. Nothing less than a thoroughbred Christianity is necessary now.

The situation has been stated by Principal Galloway, in his usual masterly manner, as follows: "Where a higher religion has developed a complicated system of ritual observances it brings the sense of the sacred into close and constant relation with the varied details of life. On the other hand, the religion itself is exposed to great dangers. The magical beliefs, which are a heritage of older religions, always tend to reassert themselves, and the religious rites readily degenerate to a mechanical performance which has intrinsic efficacy. When this happens the way to spiritual development is closed."*

. . . . .

* *Encyclopædia Britannica:* Article, "Religion."

Mr. Lippmann shows that Western Civilisation has now come to depend mainly upon technology, and that this is dependent upon the research scientist, who is the highest type of humanity because the most disinterested and mature. "This is an original and tremendous fact in human experience . . . that this pure science should be dependent upon a race of men who consciously refuse, as Mr. Bertrand Russell has said, to regard their own desires, tastes, and interests as affording a key to the understanding of the world."*

This disinterested pursuit of natural truth Mr. Lippmann regards as a high form of religion. It must be admitted that it contains at least one element that should be favourable to pure Christianity as distinct from its existing institutions; and Mr. Stanley Jones views this in optimistic light, saying that "the scientific attitude towards life" is the best preparation for the Gospel.†

Science and Christianity alike are based on truth. The scientific attitude to life should lead to a more wide-spread examination of Christian truth, or men will be deliberately cutting off an important part of their intellectual and spiritual environment, and refusing valuable evidence on life. The pursuit of science does not lead directly to Christ because natural causes do not have spiritual effects. It is not as scientists but as sinners that men feel the need of a Saviour.

* *Preface to Morals*, 238. † *The Christ of every Road*, 9-12.

Still, it is true that the modern desire to get down to facts is in favour of Christianity, because Christianity is founded on the historical fact of Christ. Hence the application of the scientific method to Christianity, if the investigation is "disinterested and mature," should be welcomed. There is already some movement in this direction. The decline in our present forms of worship is no evidence that pure Christianity, in other or in no definite religious forms, is failing. There is some evidence to the contrary.

One of the most encouraging signs of our times is the increased and increasing devotion to truth. Intellectual honesty is much more common than it was a few generations ago, and this has led to a higher standard of conduct. Even the imperfect legislative attempts to counteract selfishness, as well as the higher national ideals of to-day, are examples of a desire to adopt the principles of Christ. Few will assert that the improved moral standard can be traced to any other source; and Christ is the Truth. The moral delinquencies that remain are seen more clearly than when the moral tone was lower; for a stronger light casts a deeper shadow.

The failure of the Churches is a biological defect —sterility. Without suggesting that the whole of Professor Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* would be accepted now, it must be remembered that he was an evolutionist, that he saw with intense clearness the relationship of Christianity to science, and that his belief in Christianity, being essentially organic, is probably true. The present

writer cannot conceive of Christianity being otherwise, for it consists in spiritual life.

The kind of life that makes men Christians may be similar, in part, to natural life; but it is not the same life,* though it also demands a voluntary act of will for its genesis.† Hence the only fundamental need seems to be for spiritual people to direct others to Christ, who is the source of life eternal. If scientists would apply their natural methods to the spiritual kingdom they would find that pure Christianity was true, and thus they might find that Christ was their Saviour.

. . . . .

A sociological aspect of the subject is brought forward very forcibly by Mr. Lippmann. He writes of the United States, but the English people are now entering upon the condition already in existence there. This condition is the disillusionment following emancipation. The masses have escaped from the tyrannies of kings and priests. "They are free to make their own lives . . . yet the result is not so good as they thought it would be. The prison door is wide open. They stagger out into trackless space under a blinding sun. They find it nerve-wracking."‡ Most of them abandon themselves to the popular ideas of pleasure—cinemas, dancing, and other light amusements, but these things do not satisfy them. They are already becoming bored and restless.

* St. John iii, 6. † *Ibid.*, I, 12; III, 16; V, 24.
‡ *A Preface to Morals*, 7.

Nobody questions the gains of modernity in our inventions for comfort, transport, and other amenities of life; above all in our access to liberty. We need not discuss if the masses are any better off than they were when they had less freedom, but there is another side to this account that is usually forgotten; there have been losses to balance the gains, and the greatest loss is faith.

Mr. Lippmann dwells on this. He writes: "There has gone out of modern life a working conviction that we are living under the domination of one supreme ideal, the attainment of eternal happiness by obedience to God's will on earth."*

We are becoming critical of, or indifferent to, traditional Christianity. It has been very imperfect in practice and it is now failing; but on the whole, and with considerable exceptions, it has formed a foundation for moral living. We are faced with the breaking up of this old foundation and there is nothing new to take its place. The Russian Soviet is trying to inculcate its conception of natural science in place of the old religion, which it regards as pure superstition; and it is teaching evolution to the peasantry, with no prospect of success. Nothing new can save the people. True Christianity, which alone can save them, is extremely old. Even the domination of a half-paganised Church was better for mankind than general agnosticism and infidelity.

There is no present prospect of Christian Institutionalism securing the allegiance of mankind.

* *A Preface to Morals*, 69.

The general trend is in a very different, if not in the opposite, direction; and the recent rift between the public and the institutions is widened by recent changes in primitive social customs.

Personal liberty is historically modern and is now, except among Romanists, universal. It has led to an impatience of authority that now flows in full spate. Servants combine against their masters, women are no longer subject to men, youth is losing its reverence for age, and nearly all have turned against ecclesiastical authority. Few resist the State because few have any desire to rebel against an authority that is supposed to represent themselves; because also it has executive officers to deal with revolt. The merits and demerits of these changes are beyond our scope, but the facts are unquestionable.

The quest for truth and the extension of learning are driving a wedge between Christianity and its institutions. History has been popularised, and the evil deeds of the Church in the bad old days are now common knowledge. These turn people, with the prevailing conceptions of good conduct, away from institutions with such a murky past. Nothing less than a clean break with such tainted corporations can satisfy their moral ideals.

Any attempt, therefore, to reimpose the authority of what is called the Church, meaning one or more of the Christian Institutions, is contrary to the spirit of the age, and can only succeed to the extent that credulity can be imposed upon. Whether

this spirit or the effort to resist it may be the better does not now concern us; but it is noteworthy that all who escape from rigorous ecclesiastical discipline become indifferent to all religion. It is a modern fact of experience that religious externals are becoming more and more objectionable to the younger generation. This by no means implies that they are godless, and it may denote a greater spirituality. It is certainly a feature that needs to be met.

One point seems clear and it is fundamental: that our worst troubles are caused by selfishness in all classes. This no government can cure and most governments aggravate. Christ can cure it, given enough time for His Spirit to work through His people, and there is no other means of saving our civilisation. Professor Gwatkin truly said: "It is plain that neither science nor culture nor socialism nor nominal religion will save civilisation from another catastrophe."*

When shipwreck seems not merely possible but impending it is well to exercise care. Our Protestant Institutions appear to be drifting towards a lee shore. The ship in which St. Paul sailed towards Rome has been likened to the Church of Christ, setting out at unity with itself, then battered by storms and finally broken up. Without regarding this parallel too seriously, it is interesting and perhaps instructive to notice how Paul "commanded that

* *The Knowledge of God*, II, 175. See also Neville Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*.

they who could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land." (Our italics.) These would represent Christians devoid of institutional instincts. "And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."* No visible Church is going to glorify herself by sailing grandly into port; and individuals who cannot swim may be in danger.

2. *Ecclesiastical Maternity.*—We have seen that one cause alone, a form of Christian sterility, will account for the failure of the Churches; and that sacerdotal, intellectual and other difficulties contribute to this. Sterility is a natural effect of senility, and Institutional Christianity, regarded as a whole, is conspicuously senile; though this must not blind us to the vital functions it has performed in the past. Let us consider this, without emotion, and in the spirit of a scientist describing some interesting species.

If we may regard Institutional or Corporate Christianity as an organism, we shall see that its dominant instincts have always been maternal. We are not now referring to the Church of Christ, which is another distinct conception only partly overlapping the institutions. "Mother Church" was the truest of titles for the long-lived organism we are considering, as shown in propagation, infantile instruction, nutrition and defence. She has ever exercised a watchful care over her young;

* Acts xxvii, 43, 44.

but she is inadequate to their further development; and her fertility, as we have seen, has ceased.

Many Christians now resemble the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in their reverence for an old religious institution. *He* regarded Judaism as a departed parent; *they* see that Institutional Christianity is showing signs of age. Neither the Jewish nor the Christian ecclesiastical institution could be expected to adapt itself to utterly new and vastly more extensive conditions than it was accustomed to. Mother Church should be honoured to-day for her care of Christianity during its youth; but she cannot keep pace with its development, and she should not restrict its progress.

She is now old and dignified, inactive and sedate. Her joints are getting stiff and her breath short for the uphill work of modern Christianity. She resembles an ancient dame who now needs her comforts, especially culture and religion. Her strong boys have to deal with sterner conditions than these. She cannot endure the elements which they face with exhilaration, and must needs stay within doors, in an atmosphere that is suffocating to them. They have to contend with the storms outside, and grapple with nature in her sternest moods. Their life seems dreadful to her, and so does her life to them.

Companionship and compromise between the two outlooks are difficult, unless Christianity is to decay, and such a suggestion would be received by its young life with scornful jests; though some

of them realise, seriously enough, that they cannot expect the old lady to last for ever.

She is now dependent on many little adjuncts to life that she spurned in her youth, and which it would be cruel to think of denying her; but her children must go forth into the hard world equipped in a more Spartan fashion, trusting only upon essentials and shaking off the shackles of superfluities.

Institutional Christianity thus resembles a *grande dame* who is a long time dying, yet who seems to be approaching the limit of her allotted span. Her mind is wonderfully active for her age, and she imagines herself as capable as ever of keeping people in what she thinks is their proper place. Naturally she is long past bearing, and all her children, except her first-born, have grown up. This poor child's mind has suffered from arrested development, and she has delusions. Her mother naturally cannot keep abreast of the times and sometimes shows distinct signs of her great age. She thinks young people are not doing right because they cannot be restrained within her senile outlook. Her younger children can understand her antiquated and narrow point of view, though she cannot see their wider outlook.

Her first-born is her pride because, like herself, she shows so little sign of ever changing. Neither of them have any patience with the way other families regulate their affairs; they think that others are all wrong, if not positively wicked.

They cannot understand that all have life, which will develop according to its own internal laws.

Modern knowledge is quite beyond Mother Church. She thinks it all very dreadful, and it causes her much needless pain. Like all old people she cannot alter now, and judges everything by her own past. She is blind to the cosmic fact that life must continue without her and beyond her.

Christianity refuses to be tied to its mother's apron strings, and indeed is cutting them now. Not even mothers can arrest its full development. The corporate form served maternal purposes until our faith became of age to fend for itself. This stage has now been reached, and the present position would resemble the stirring up of an eagle's nest for the independent flight of the young if Mother Church had the unerring instincts of the hen bird.*

Corporate methods hinder progress by reducing initiative, ability, and output. They have their functions in the earlier stages of development, but their utility is temporary because their strongest instincts are exclusive conservative. In this they resemble maternity.

Mother Church has ever shown her nursing instincts, such as in her attention to minutiæ, suitable for the immature; also in her undue excitement over trifles, imperviability to logic, and her usual blindness to greater issues, all of which are rather pitiful to the fully developed.

* See *Wilderness Ways*, and *Fowls of the Air*, W. J. Long.

The present failure of the Churches to perform the dominant function of maternity, or the propagation of the species, is the crux of the matter, and leads to one suggestion, which is placed most conveniently here, and arises out of a diagnosis that is based more or less on scientific principles.

3. *A Suggestion.*—Our business in this book is to do a little pioneering. No pretensions are made to anything more than the examination of preliminaries. Our province is preparation. There are several reasons for this: 1. Because it was before all things necessary to establish the main facts. These appear to be so widely disregarded that Christianity is erroneously thought to be in a state of chaos, when this is true only of its institutional forms. Prejudice often prevents the truth from being known; and few people seem to have any accurate conception of where they stand in relation to Christianity proper. 2. There has been too much construction without first clearing the site of rubbish and detritus, and too much building on insecure foundations with materials that were not Christian. This has been easier than obeying God, but it has altered the character of Institutional Christianity and been fatal to its service for Christ. The Gospel was not capable of alteration without being spoilt. It was not given by the dispensation of angels but by God the Son. Any deviation from His truth was evil, and every reasonable attempt to return to it must be good. 3. It was necessary to curtail

the output of printed matter if this book was to have more than a small circulation. First principles could not be omitted, and practical suggestions are not our present purpose. As they may be expected, however, one suggestion will be made.

One curious effect of our civilisation is to make us ashamed of the natural processes of increase, and this seems true of the spiritual as well as of the natural world. The rate of increase in nations and Churches alike diminishes. It may be a sign of over-civilisation that some of our most primitive functions should seem unfit even for thought; or it may be the result of sin, or both. However this is, there has been a similar flinching from the theory and the practice of what, strictly speaking, is spiritual reproduction. Christianity can be continued only by what is known as the new birth in Christ, which is probably the genesis of an actual spiritual existence. This has been neglected by the Churches, and they are now suffering from their own spiritual sterility.

Evangelistic work, which is the seed-sowing of the Gospel, should be the glory of every Church as children were, until recently, of the home. To fail in this is to fail permanently, because if the failure continues Christian life must cease. Yet the fashions of this world have so permeated the Christian Institutions that evangelists and their efforts are now generally looked down upon and almost entirely excluded from them. To say that this must be altered seems vain, for there is little hope of

such reform; but this is the one thing needful for *Christians*, with or without the Churches, to undertake.

The only suggestion really worth making, obvious as it may be, in theory, is that the whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ should be practised and proclaimed. The manner in which this should be done is of little importance, and could well vary with local circumstances. Christ's promise, that if He is lifted up He will draw all men to Him, has never yet failed.

It is clear, since nine-tenths of the people have some objection to institutionalism, that the greatest success would attend non-institutional methods. The call comes directly to every true believer in our Lord to tell others about Him. More may be done by conversations with individuals than by any kind of religious service or meeting, though gatherings there must be; and the fruits of God's Spirit must be seen in the life, or more harm than good will be done by talking of these things.

Canon Overton realised this need when he wrote that we required, in addition to our present services, " more irregular machinery " for touching the masses.* These unsophisticated multitudes must have very simple forms. The Prayer Book is quite beyond them, as it takes years to understand. A large number of people do not attend mission and other churches of the Anglican Institution because they are afraid of making themselves conspicuous,

* *The Church in England*, II, 411.

if not ridiculous, by their ignorance of the Prayer Book.

There is nothing common about the Book of Common Prayer. It could scarcely be improved for a Christian aristocracy; but many years of familiarity with it are necessary to appreciate its beauty. Admiration for the exquisite balance in its doctrinal orthodoxy grows indefinitely on all who know and love it. To cite one example: although the book was the fruit of a compromise, the ministry of God's Word, in accordance with apostolic practice, is given precedence over that of the sacraments. The Prayer Book needs to be brought up to date, if this can be done without destroying its spiritual message. It was not intended, however, for evangelistic services but for instructed Christians.

"Non-ecclesiastical Christianity exists on every hand. It is not a condemnation of the Churches so much as the revelation of a spiritual life universal in its potency, and therefore perpetually seeking outlet beyond the main channels thus far cut for it."* The Salvation Army is the greatest example of this tendency; but the Adult School Movement, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A. and the great Student Christian Movement further indicate its extensiveness.

There is something remarkable in the fact that the methods best calculated to win the masses for Christ are precisely those that people of education

* *Outline of Christianity*, III, 309.

and refinement most detest. Simple Gospel Services of the hale and hearty type, Bible Classes, Sunday Schools, Cottage Meetings and Open Air Services, when conducted by suitable men, are most successful. The writer's father initiated, fifty years ago, and maintained for thirty years, a splendid work of this character almost single-handed, and it had God's most definite and abundant blessing. Hundreds of neglected men and women were started on the right road at that adult-school and mission.

What is known as conversion is the first essential, for it is the genesis of life, and without it, on our Lord's authority, "Ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."* The mechanistic theories of the institutions have thrust the doctrine and practice of salvation by faith into the background. It is now time that this seminal subject was restored to its proper place in the forefront of Christianity. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says: "The doctrine of salvation has taken the most prominent place in the Christian faith. . . . To a large proportion of believers it has been the supreme doctrine."†

Conversion, or the new birth (for there is no haggling over terms in the New Testament), being the entrance to, but not the whole of, the kingdom of God, there follows "the slow unfolding in life of what was involved in that first decisive step." Professor Gwatkin's words, as given in the motto to Chapter III, are here quoted deliberately and

* St. Matthew xviii, 3. † Article, "Christianity."

with veneration. Could a better description of personal Christianity be found? The culture and practice of the spiritual life, however, attractive as it is, can be mentioned here only for the purpose of drawing attention to the second and greater part of the Gospel.

The source of the Christian life within men is virtually independent of everything except God, yet this life requires cultivation. In the darkest ages, it is said, there were some who walked with God; and Brother Lawrence, in his tiny book obtainable to-day,* has left an enduring record of human fellowship with the divine.

If the fountainhead of the stream is pure its waters will support the higher life. The immediate problem, indeed, is that of awakening the natural man to his spiritual needs, and this is too frequently complicated in practice by the use of institutional machinery. The call is clear for every Christian to win others for Christ, and for the Churches to "cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. . . . Brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."†

* *The Practice of the Presence of God.* † Galations iv, 30; v, 1.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"*You can worship Christ, or you can put Necessity on the throne of Christ and worship that.*"

PROFESSOR GWATKIN.

"*The world in which it was so respectable to profess sectarianism, and so outré to profess Christianity.*"

S. FOWLER WRIGHT.

OUR rambling thoughts on the failure of Institutional Christianity have led us along a path that may seem strange, and in places perilous, to many devout souls. Thus seem the ways of all pioneers and explorers until the routes they blaze through the unknown become the highroads of the multitude. Our road, unfamiliar as it may seem to some, has at least led us to the Saviour of the world.

The institutional forms of worship that are now declining have had a chequered career. Simple and spiritual at first, they became progressively more elaborate, absorbing Greek art and Pagan ceremonial. They fell back into Hebraism and imbibed Roman legalism. During the Dark Ages they sank into mythology, superstition and idolatry. Partly purged at, and since, the Reformation,

Institutional Christianity has reached us in various forms, none of which seem to hold out much hope for the future.

Institutional Christianity has failed principally because, unlike true Christianity, it has not adequately represented either the Gospel of Christ or human life and experience. It has narrowed itself down to little more than an ordinary religious cult, with a tincture of Christian teaching. A definite amount of Christianity exists outside the Churches; hence there is no reason for undue alarm at our emptying sanctuaries, much as we may wish they were filled with devout worshippers. The decline is more serious from the standpoint of traditionalists than from that of other Christians.

. . . . .

It seems inadvisable, if it were possible, to delve here far below the surface; and space forbids the discussion of fundamental principles. But St. Paul stated an important truth when he wrote: "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."* Our attitude has been that of the spiritual man in the natural, rather than in the spiritual, world. It may be necessary, in the future, to return to this or some kindred subject. The present performance, however, should end on the key-note of its author's intention.

* 1 Corinthians xv, 46.

The human race may or may not have nearly reached the limits of its *natural* development; but its *spiritual* evolution, if any, has scarcely begun. Immersed in our materialistic civilisation, we need reminding that man is spirit as well as flesh, and that spirit alone is eternal. We can form little conception of human possibilities in the higher realm, and speculation is profitless. Worship in the distant future, we can at least be sure, " must be " in spirit and truth. The materialised worship of the past will perish. If not, there will be no progress.

We are told that either reason or authority is supreme. Yet to plain men reason is an authority and in its province dominant; but as knowledge, though extending, is still limited in every direction, it appears unreasonable to refuse the evidence of what is termed " revelation." It is now recognised that we have no absolutely infallible authority, and so nothing to absolve the individual from responsibility. We may paraphrase the motto at the head of this chapter and say: " You can worship God, or you can place Reason on the throne of God and worship *that*."

Many Christians follow Gladstone in claiming the liberty of thinking freely without becoming Freethinkers, and of acting in a manner that seems to them rational though they are not Rationalists. They realise the existence of an unseen as well as of a visible universe, and hold that matter is subordinate to, and must subserve, spirit. They believe also that though no man by searching can find out

God, He has made Himself known through revelation, reason, and conscience. That conscience prevails over reason among men is seen by a curious example: that while the Bible was being blown to bits by the intellectuals, its circulation was increasing beyond all records, and it is still the most popular book in the world.

The spiritual progress of the human race depends upon its relation to Christianity; not necessarily to *Institutional* Christianity and not, of course, to *decadent* Christianity. Impure Christianity is as useless as salt that has lost its savour. The purest Christianity is needed for the backward races as well as for ourselves, or Christendom may pay the penalty of its unfaithfulness to Christ. While mint and cummin are being tithed by institutionalism, the hordes of India and China are awakening to infidelity, and do not lack agitators. God alone can stop them from working their unregenerate wills upon the world.

The present position appears to be somewhat as follows: Western Civilisation has its social-religious organ consisting of certain institutions variously connected with historic Christianity. These Christian Institutions are termed " the Churches." They have been a valuable part of our civilisation; but they cannot heal its sickness because they themselves suffer from it. There seems no purpose in blaming them for this; but it is important to face the facts.

The Christian Churches could, conceivably, become the saviours of society. In order to save it they would be obliged, as Churches,* to disentangle themselves from, without losing contact with, that which they proposed to save. At present they are in the unenviable situation of a swimmer who, in waters deep and swift, is vainly attempting to rescue a man who cannot swim. The drowning man has thrown his arms and legs around his rescuer. In this entanglement both must perish sooner or later; but if the rescuer, with God's good help, could elude the clammy embrace, it would be possible to bring the doomed man to the shore alive.

The Christian Institutions have lost too much of their distinctively Christian savour. This may have been, in part, the result of using it. Our Lord told His followers to do that which, apart from Him, is impossible; and the Churches have drifted apart. The savour was to be used, obviously, only to the extent that it could be preserved; yet using it among non-Christians tends to dissipate and even destroy it. The Churches have made heroic efforts to help the rest of mankind, but too frequently these efforts have been merely human, and undertaken without God's guidance. Thus the point has long been passed, historically, when the specifically Christian savour was lost.

Some of the recent attempts made to stop the

* The position of the individual Christian is not identical with that of the institutions, and will be mentioned shortly.

breach between the Churches and the people,* from the Christian standpoint, are pitiful. Coming down to the level of the natural man in *spiritual* things cannot raise him up; though he may never be raised by standing aloof. There is ample common ground between Christians and others among things that are indifferent, in the ordinary affairs of life. The things of the spirit have an inherent distinctiveness. While the life of the Christian should be full, his worship is better simple.

Christians will never win outsiders for Christ if they are "cranks" on such perfectly normal functions as eating or drinking, and recently on smoking. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." Few things are more wicked than trying to improve on the Bible, in which God's goodness is seen to be unstinted. What an example of divine sympathy with man is seen in the command that the Hebrew priests should not take wine *before* their ministrations, and in the absence of any such command *afterwards!*† One of the medical functions of wine is to counteract nervous reaction.

The world is tired of abnormal and subnormal people. If we had real democratic government they would be prohibited by legislation from preying upon the harmless majority. These persistent, and sometimes pestilent, minorities treat

* A few examples of these are given in Appendix IV.
† Leviticus x, 9.

the greater part of normal men and women as if they were children, and have done untold harm to Christianity.

While Christians should live good and matured natural lives, like their Master, and should witness for Him by the high level of their conduct, Churches need much greater circumspection than individuals in their relation to the rest of the world. They have not shown it. Some of them have prostituted their spiritual genius in vain efforts to keep their young people in touch with "the place." This secular policy has failed, as it was doomed to fail; and the evidence seems to be that God's Spirit is being withdrawn from a number of local churches.

. . . . .

Public worship conceivably may decline until a crisis is reached when the Churches will have to be purged of their non-Christian elements. Some Churches are being strangled, from the Christian point of view, by their devotees and fanatics, and others by materially-minded supporters. Drastic measures may be necessary to prolong the existence of such institutions. The head of one Protestant Church has recently declared that, if the present rate of decrease in its membership continues, extinction will be reached in ten years. Other institutions, and perhaps the majority of them, may long remain to do good work; but the future seems to lie outside them all, as they are at present. The drift away from the Protestant Churches is

not a mere eddy or surface current; it is a general trend of the human race, for which there are two or three reasons.

The first of these reasons is the great evil power or influence that the Bible terms sin, working mainly beneath the surface of life. To meet and conquer it the Gospel of Christ still lives and works among men. Nothing else can do it. The extension of the Gospel depends upon God's people, as it did upon the early Church, and should depend upon the Churches now if they remained faithful.

It has been assumed that all men are religious, though precisely what is meant by this is not clear. All are more or less emotional, and even Christianity as a religion has usually made its appeal to the emotions. What is to be said when nine-tenths of our people will not have our religion? Are nearly forty millions of people practising secret cults?

They all need God, whether they realise this or not; but most of them are not religious, for that is our problem. That all have the capacity for knowing God must be true. They therefore need *the knowledge of God completely stripped of all religious trappings*, as our Lord taught when on earth. This, because it would be Him, they might accept. If not, His people would have done their best. They have never done this until they have brought the natural man face to face with his Saviour.

A second reason for this general trend away from the Christian institutions arises from the first—

the effect of the Reformation on the natural man; if he is given liberty he is certain, sooner or later, to abuse it. This is no argument for restriction of liberty, for such restriction would be godless; God gave man liberty though He knew it would be abused. It is an argument for the conversion of the natural man to Christ.

The political effect of the Reformation, predominant in England, has outstripped its religious effect. Instead of the natural man exercising his freedom by voluntarily worshipping God, he seems only too glad to leave Him in the background of his life. He will often tell you that he is not a religious man. Why should he be? Tell him that he may be none the worse without religion if he will not live without God, and you may interest him. If you do, he may eventually join in Christian worship, or he may not; but this is not of the first importance. If he has Christ he has "all things."

Let the few who prefer traditionalism by all means continue their adherence to it; but there is no need for them to unchristianise the many who are weary with historic survivals and feel their need of a higher life. As a matter of fact "the non-theological type of religion . . . is rapidly gaining ground among the laity and young people who are in school and college."*

Religion or no religion, the people should know

* Professor Shailer Mathews, D.D., LL.D., in *Outline of Christianity*, III. 336.

God. It would be a dog-in-the-manger policy to say that if they cannot swallow Institutional Christianity they shall not have the Saviour. Who knows that they do not want Him, without all the human detritus that has gathered about His Name? His worship has been enshrined in art and made, as we thought, attractive; but they will not rise to this bait.

The opposite extreme of austerity must also be avoided if the people are to be won. Asceticism is often accompanied by impurity of worship. The argument is for simplicity of worship accompanied by " a reasonable and Christian belief that pleasure is as much God's message as pain, and to be refused only on definite grounds of wrong or danger to ourselves or others. The asceticism that refuses it on general grounds belongs to the dualism which counts creation evil. It differs in principle from the Christian self-denial which denies only the flesh—by which St. Paul means not the body, but the spirit of rebellion we made our second nature."*

Our Lord's power to save is manifested in our midst even to-day, though not to the knowledge of all institutionalists, some of whom try to keep up the fiction that membership in their institutions automatically and miraculously entails eternal salvation. There is little danger of anyone being converted in church; but should such a thing happen to disturb our conventions, what a terrible shock

* Gwatkin: *The Knowledge of God*, II, 102-103.

it would be to traditionalism and its devotees! Yet what are churches for?

The Saviour is driven to the byways in His search for human souls, and He finds them there. Some of the poor still have the Gospel preached to them in unassuming halls and rooms dotted about all over the country. In many large towns, also, congregations of some importance gather for simple worship and evangelisation. Christianity is still alive in these, while its grand institutions are decaying.

Non-institutional Christianity, like its Saviour, is largely "despised and rejected," though not of all men, for many love it. Its virtue is that it is weak enough for God to use. The great institutions appear to be losing their sense of dependence upon God and are in danger, therefore, of losing His Presence. The result is spiritual sterility.

It is said (but God knoweth) that town dwellers become naturally sterile in two or three generations. This seems at least possible, apart from any deliberate birth-control. The amount of sheer sterility in three generations is often overlooked: the first generation migrating from the country with large families being succeeded by smaller families and finally by none. Now this is being matched, in the spiritual kingdom, by the Churches. They have been progressively failing to propagate their species by the new birth in Christ; and there is no other method of increase. The divine imperative was: "Ye must be born anew, or from above." Souls

are not being born, hence the decline. This is the serious feature of what we have called this "general trend."

. . . . .

The Archbishop of York, in his broadcast "Point of View" (Feb. 1930), said that our Lord did not give us the goal of man's destiny "but the direction to be followed and the power to follow it"; and that four principles were included in this Christian view of life: 1. The sacredness of personality. 2. The brotherhood of man. 3. Service. 4. Love.

The Archbishop's brief exposition of these principles showed that he, at least, though a prominent institutionalist, has a firm grasp of pure Christianity. He said: "Progress meant the perpetually fuller recognition of the personal element . . . in all relations of life, that . . . showed itself in all things in free, intelligent choice": that "we were not isolated individuals. . . . Progress meant the perpetually fuller realisation in practice of that fact of fellow-membership in the family of God"; that "the duty of man was to serve God by serving his fellows," putting service before gain; and that "power was subordinated to love," which exercised its power by self-sacrifice. This was the way of the Cross.*

No Church could be in a hopeless condition

* *The Times*, Feb. 11, 1930.

from the Christian standpoint if it had enough men with such convictions as these; but it is one thing for leaders to be above praise, and another for their influence to permeate institutions soaked in a traditionalism that leaves little room, not always in theory but usually in practice, for the Spirit of Christ. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth"; but is there one example on record of the Spirit reviving an ancient and decaying Church?

There is not the same doubt about the individual, nor about the Church of Christ. The Christian Ecclesia is divine in origin, and ever young. It is holy, universal, and at unity in itself and with its Lord because every member is a child of God. It is the Lord's body of people. It is His bride, and it is glorious.* Truly, as Professor Gwatkin said, our Lord stands in a closer relation to individuals than most Christians realise. We do not occupy our spiritual heritage, or our witness would be stronger and its results more effective. We dare not say that God is not inspiring and guiding His people, but they are weak when they could be strong if they were willing to be filled with His Spirit.

The Church of Christ needs more spiritual and moral power, and this is wielded by God's Spirit. "The belief is almost universal that the Churches need a new infusion of the Spirit—in which details of ecclesiastical order and administrative machinery may be consigned to their own less significant

* See also *Catholicism and Christianity*, 232.

place.* This approximately sums up what we have been trying to say in this little book, with the difference that individuals would seem more hopeful than institutions.

Churches can prolong their existence and become more popular by pandering to the natural tastes of the natural man, but this is not a Christian method. If the institutions are faithful to their mission they will concentrate on the evangelisation of the world until all have had equality in the opportunity of salvation. The clergy, however, through no fault of their own, have become so hardened to non-spiritual activities that it would take years, humanly speaking, before they or their successors were ripe for a forward movement of this character.

It would be easy to preach on the subject we have been considering; but this has been deliberately avoided in the belief that what needed doing just now was to try and focus attention on the main facts relating to the decline of the Churches. This, it is hoped, has been done.

The present does not seem a suitable time for playing round the circumference of Christianity. We need to cut through everything down to the heart of our faith. Few Christians, it may be, are called to be evangelists; but the people need Christ, and His Gospel has never yet failed. The great work must be done by those young enough

* *The Times Literary Supplement:* Review on *The Christ of every Road*, Mar. 6, 1930, p. 195.

to have strength for it, though all Christians could show greater loyalty to our Lord. If we did this He could make more use of His imperfect agents for the benefit of their fellows and the glory of God which is our highest good.

"Oh the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, my own beloved Lord!
Every tongue Thy Name confessing,
Worship, honour, glory, blessing
Brought to Thee with one accord,
Thee, my Master and my Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned,
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored, and owned!"

APPENDIX I

PROFESSOR GWATKIN'S ACADEMIC CAREER

In 1867 Henry Melville Gwatkin took a Triple First at Cambridge University, in the Classical, Moral Science, and Mathematical Triposes, in the last of which he was Twenty-Sixth Wrangler.

In 1868 he was the only First in Theology; he won the Scholefield Prize for Biblical Greek, the Crosse Theological Scholarship, and was made a Fellow of St. John's College. In 1870 he won the Tyrwhitt Hebrew Scholarship. In 1886 he was one of the examiners, for the first but not the last time, in the Historical Tripos.

In 1891 he succeeded Bishop Creighton as Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History, with its Fellowship at Emmanuel College. In 1903-1905 he was the Gifford Lecturer at Edinburgh.

Has any other scholar at Oxford or Cambridge taken four, most of them brilliant, Firsts, and then been an examiner in a fifth subject? The interrelation of the different branches of knowledge made him truly great. He had almost an unequalled grasp of truth, and so could express his opinions fearlessly, because distinctively.

APPENDIX II

"THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF RELIGION"*

Mr. Joad's book was published after the present one was written. Its appearance seems to intimate that we may expect divers writers to deal with a subject as important and pressing as the decline in organised religion. The purpose expressed in *The Present and Future of Religion*, as the title implies, is similar to that of this book; but it is by no means identical, and the standpoints of the writers are very far apart.

Mr. Joad surveys *religion* as a philosophical spectator from the outside. I have tried to view *Christianity* as a Christian from the inside. Neither of us write as institutionalists, and this is approximately all we have in common.

One effect of Mr. Joad's detached position is that, unintentionally, he sometimes wounds the susceptibilities of Christians by what seems to us irreverence. His pen is caustic and he hits hard, if not without due cause. Yet he believes that religion is a human necessity. He analyses its decline and suggests improvements.

Some valuable statistics are given which supplement and emphasise those presented here in Chapter

* By C. E. M. Joad (Ernest Benn, 1930).

II. Institutional Christianity, which Mr. Joad agrees with me is failing to meet the present need, is subjected by him to an ardent assault. He appears, however, to confuse "the gospel of Christ" with it.*

The limitation of the spectator's vision is most clearly seen when the Bible is the object viewed from outside, for it cannot be understood (and it is frequently quite misunderstood), without years of sympathetic study. Otherwise Mr. Joad's book is rarely unfair, and it represents, no doubt, a large proportion of the 90 per cent who are outside the Churches and have socialistic, but not materialistic, tendencies. Mr. Joad appears to occupy the extreme position, short of scepticism, opposite to that of convinced traditional institutionalists.

* See page 24 of his book.

APPENDIX III

"THE IMPATIENCE OF A PARSON"*

THE PURPOSE of the Dean of Canterbury's book is so much akin to that of this one that it seems impossible to remain silent about it, though it was not read until my own manuscript was nearly completed. A few references to it are incorporated in the text, but these are quite inadequate for such a book, and the only way to satisfy myself is to make this addition.

The book may perhaps be likened to a bombshell in a cathedral, for any material damage should be followed by spiritual benefit. Surprise that one's private thoughts should see the light by another's hand is succeeded by joy at the truly Christian message it conveys. Here, evidently, is the secret of the crowds at St. Martins-in-the-Fields.

It should be an epoch-making book, for it is an agitation designed to produce an institutional revolution; though the Dean may be attempting the impossible. This brings us to the fundamental difference between the Dean's book and my own, which is the difference between institutionalism and liberty. However much a great institution may conceivably, by the power of God, be reformed, it

* By the Very Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard (Hodder and Stoughton).

would be a great institution still; and as such it could not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in as rich a measure as individual Christians. It would, also, still be hated by the many to whom no institution appeals. Such is the position of the convinced and unrepentant free-lance, whose body may be chained but whose mind is unsubdued.

A Church dignitary must be an institutionalist; others may or may not be. The position of the former, it is suggested, limits the truth; yet "the word of God is not bound." In order to deal with the great problem that confronts us, a perfectly open field and no favour are essential. As long as our only assumption is that the Christianity of our Lord Jesus Christ is the need of the world we may hope; but if we are to add such further assumptions as those already mentioned we are imposing human limitations on God's Truth.

On a superficial view it would seem that a free-lance should not belong to any institution. The Church of England, however, allows a large amount of liberty, and would benefit could it allow more; for it suffers most of all from legalism. It is better to regard our Lord, rather than the Lambeth Conference, as the final authority.

The Dean's book is based on the unchristian state of the Churches instead of on the decline in membership and attendance. This is approximately the difference between function and structure, though the former is not omitted here, for the two are intimately related. They meet, ultimately, in the

individual, where the Dean also believes the good work must begin; but he hopes that enough Church members will become divinely inspired to put the Churches right. One can only admire his optimism.

The great harvest that awaits its reapers lies outside the Churches; and if we assume nothing beyond the Christianity of our Lord it is difficult to be oblivious of the fact that the Churches have not gathered in these sheaves. From this it seems to follow, not that the Churches need reform in order to win the people (though this is true enough) but that the masses should be given the Gospel. The means adopted are less important, provided they are truly Christian, and preferably non-institutional, because the people are not attracted by institutionalism.

The Dean's argument, in one sense, seems to be carried in the present book to its logical conclusion, as well as traced to its source. He makes many complaints, without seeking for the cause of the trouble, as we have attempted to do. Again, if we are to get to work, we cannot be hampered by the dead weight of mere historical survivals. Dr. Sheppard writes of the impossibility, at times, of being "loyal to Christ and the Church."* This is the crucial difficulty for all true church members, and one with which they ought never to be faced; nor can they be blamed if, in such a crisis, they remain, like the Dean, faithful to their Lord. To Dr. Sheppard this means another reformation of

* Page 29.

the Churches. Others feel they are in no degree responsible for the state of the churches, and that Christ can be served better by methods that may appear to bear more resemblance to a guerrilla warfare against sin.

The Dean's book and the present one afford each other a certain amount of support. Evidence is given here for some of his criticisms, and we have substantially the same message, though our standpoints are different. The books were written independently, but they touch at points and sometimes confirm one another.

The position seems to be this: the Dean, though an institutionalist, admits the failure of institutionalism and pleads for its reform; while the suggestion here is to get on with the work by non-institutional means. Surely the latter is the direct, and the former an indirect, method. From this it follows that the whole country could be evangelised before the Churches were in a condition to begin.

The Impatience of a Parson is modern in outlook and sympathetic in spirit. It is clear, and easily understood. It is a word very much in season, but it is more; it is a trumpet call to ancient walls and towers that they would do well to hear and answer.

APPENDIX IV

DATA ON THE STATE OF INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY IN ENGLAND*

In 1851, the year of the last religious census, the population of England was 16,921,888, the places of worship numbered 34,400, and the seating capacity of 31,884 of them was 9,467,738. There were no returns from 2,516 of these places. The average of those given being 231, and as probably the smaller places made no returns, we may, perhaps, safely average these at 200 each. Thus half a million sittings must be added to the above total, making nearly ten millions in 1851.

This, if correct, was about 58 per cent of the population. The Royal Statistical Society, however, does not regard these figures as "entirely trustworthy"; but they are all we have.

"Besides the number of sittings, a census of the attendance on Sunday, March 30, 1851, was taken and the resulting figures were:

Morning . . .	4,428,338
Afternoon . .	3,030,280
Evening . . .	2,960,772† "

* From Chapter I.

† Letter from Assistant Secretary of Royal Statistical Society to the writer.

We have no information as to how many, if any, of the morning attenders went a second or third time. Hence, all we can be sure of is that there were from about four and a quarter to nearly ten and a half millions of worshippers on that day. The mean of these two figures is nearly seven and a half millions. Its equivalent percentages of the population are from 25 to 61, and the mean of them is 43 per cent.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (14th edition, 1929) gives the following numbers of Church members in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. No date is given, but probably it is that of the 1921 Census.

	Methodist.	Protestants.	Totals.
Anglican		2,294,000	
Roman Catholic			1,930,000
Congregational		494,199	
Wesleyan Methodist	490,000		
Primitive Methodist	217,000		
Calvinistic Methodist	189,000		
Independent Methodist	8,500		
Wesley Reform Union	8,000	912,500	
Baptist		414,000	
Presbyterian		84,000	
Society of Friends		19,000	4,217,699
			6,147,699

There are also 300,000 Jews; and there must be several thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of members of such religious bodies as the " Brethren," and unsectarian places of worship like the Salvation Army and mission halls, which are not included in these statistics.

The Congregational returns seem to be the only exact ones, as all the others are round numbers, most of them only to the nearest thousand, and obviously have been estimated. If it may be assumed that every sect but one desires to appear as numerous as possible, the truth must be less than the figures indicate. We shall not be safe, probably, in assuming more than six millions as the total (two millions of whom are Romanists), even including the smaller religious bodies not given in the schedule.

Six millions are 14 per cent of forty-one millions. In 1851 twenty-five per cent of the whole population attended in the morning only, so we are *certain* that our present proportion of worshippers is little more than half of what it was in 1851. But no one will suppose that our whole six millions would attend on any one Sunday morning, or that the four millions in 1851 included every Church member, though it is understood that they knew the census was being taken before the day. If therefore we *assume* that half attended on each occasion, there would be eight million members in 1851 and an attendance of three millions now. On this assumption, *the percentage of the whole population that attends once on a Sunday has fallen, during this period, from* 25 to 7. Children as well as adults are included in all the above figures.

In the Church of England, baptisms and confirmations have decreased considerably. "Since 1924 the number of baptisms has declined at

the rate of about ten thousand a year, the total of 1926 being 455,142. Confirmations have declined at about the same rate to 209,565. On Easter Day, 1926, 2,272,610 people made their communion,"* the total membership being given at 2,294,000

The "Official Year-book of the Church of England" for 1930 shows that the number of baptisms given above did not include 11,771 of riper years, making a total of 466,913. The year 1928 shows a further falling away, with 433,435 infant baptisms and 10,578 of riper years, or a total of 444,013; so the above rate of decline, ten thousand a year, is still maintained. There appears to be an error of 100,000 in the figure taken from the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of the Easter communicants in 1926, which should read 2,372,610. As there were 2,339,283 communicants at Easter, 1928, there has been a decline of 33,327 here.

The number of Easter communicants is not altogether a satisfactory basis, as seen in one parish where they have declined 10 per cent in four years, while the total number of communions made in the year has increased 20 per cent. The numbers on the Electoral Rolls are no use, however, having little or no relation to the number of worshippers. In the parish just referred to, about 20 per cent to 30 per cent of those on the roll attend. A large majority are never seen at any gathering,

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*: Article, "England, Church of." See correction in next paragraph.

sacred or secular, religious or business. The number on the Roll exceeds that of the Easter communicants by about 20 per cent.

In an industrial town known to the writer, of 25,000 population, there are four parishes, in the churches of which not more than 1,000 people habitually worship. There are about six Non-conformist churches with congregations totalling about 1,500. Not more than 10 per cent, therefore, of the inhabitants of this town are worshippers. One of the four parishes contains 5,000 people and its church does not hold as many as 500, without extra chairs. There are 230 Easter communicants; a morning congregation of about 100, with about 200 at night. This is above the average for the four churches.

In a country church with ninety on the Roll, the average attendance is about 15-20 members, with a few others. This is not below the average for country churches, which can now accommodate the whole population of their parishes. The seating accommodation in towns is insufficient for more than about 10 per cent of them. Let us consider some *qualitative data.*

The population can be divided, for our purpose, into two classes:

A. Non-churchgoers.
B. Churchgoers.

Class A includes all who enter our churches precisely three times from the cradle to the

grave, both inclusive, though only once of their own free will. The unique occasion when they walk inside is not to worship but to wed. These people form a very large proportion of this class.

Some of them, and a number of the unbaptised and unmarried, go to church, if nothing prevents them, once every year. Their purpose in making this special effort is to attend the Harvest Festival. In Lancashire, where a certain number attend twice a year, the greatest event is known as the "School Sermons." Most churches are filled at the evening service on this day, more rarely in the morning; so that on 51 Sundays out of 52, and at 102 if not 103 services out of 104, the congregations are relatively, and as a rule absolutely, small. The annual increment cannot be classed as churchgoers.

Lapsed churchgoers and communicants form a considerable proportion of this class. Young married people of Class B are unable to continue their attendance when the mythical stork first visits their home; and though the mother often will return permanently, the father rarely does. This is one of the reasons for the predominance of women in church.

The lapsing of communicants is widespread, and a continual grief to all faithful clergy. It is possible to reduce the leakage a little in small parishes where there is time for extra work, but it cannot be prevented. A majority of those

confirmed, as of those who profess conversion at revivals, sooner or later fall away.

Non-Churchgoing Christians. An increasing number of godly people, in recent years, have given up, and are still giving up, their attendance. They have various reasons for this, which they often take most seriously. The usual reasons are alterations in, or additions to, the ritual to which they have been accustomed; and the false doctrine, as they think it, often correctly, of their ministers. What proportion of the total they form is unknown.

The remaining non-churchgoers are probably a minority of Class A, except in abnormal districts, such as the slum areas of large towns. In the country, most of the population pass through the Church of England.

Nearly all the individuals of this great class are decent, law abiding, and inoffensive citizens; but very few of them are Christians. Ninety per cent of them live only for the present life, yet they do not appear to be the crux of the problem.

Class B. Churchgoers.—A few popular churches are filled, though these only account for about one-tenth of their local populations. At the other end of the scale, there are at least as many churches empty, or with half a dozen to a dozen people attending, which is no more than from one-hundredth to one-thousandth of their total inhabitants. There are churches seating upwards of a thousand

people, in parishes of several thousands, where the Sunday and only congregations number ten or twelve individuals.

Accurate statistics for the whole of England should be collected,* though the Churches might conceivably object to the nakedness of the land being discovered. We are forced to *estimate* the number of this class, but there are reliable data to work upon.

About 80 per cent of our population are now town dwellers, and most of these probably live in large parishes of from 5,000 to 10,000 souls, where there is usually one church and there are two or three chapels and mission halls with a total seating capacity of, let us say, about 1,000. This over-estimates the accommodation, for it is said to be, in the whole of England, only equal to one-tenth of the population. These places of worship are far from being, on an average, as much as half filled. We must therefore estimate the proportion of churchgoers in towns at one-tenth to one-twentieth of the whole.

The attendance in the country, whatever it may be, will not appreciably affect the result. In order however, to be as complete as possible let us estimate the number of inhabitants in the average country parish, apart from country towns, at 400 people. It has one church and no other place of worship, for country conventicles are few. The church will seat 300–400 people, not more than one-tenth of

* See Note at End.

whom attend regularly. Frequently there are less than a dozen people present.

A certain human residuum is inevitable. The minister, apparitor and organist are an irreducible minimum; usually also one or two churchwardens or deacons and some choir singers. The minister's wife, with the children and servants are nearly always present. Very often these "inevitables" form the whole congregation, and more often there are only one or two besides. In these events, and they are not infrequent, there is no voluntary congregation and the church can be said to be "empty."

Regular churchgoers can be estimated at one-tenth of the whole population of the country without any fear of this being proved an understatement of the truth. As they are diminishing, in a few years the proportion will be one-twentieth, and in a few years more one-thirtieth, unless a religious revolution takes place.

The members of this class are as intimately connected with, as they are out-numbered by, Class A. The result is that most churchgoers differ very little from their non-churchgoing relatives and friends. The husband, commonly, is in Class A and his wife in Class B. The churchgoing class is the crux of the problem because most of the individuals who compose it are not observably different from those of Class A, except in their habit of attending church, as a result of which they do not *appear* to be very much better, or worse.

Most of our real Christians, probably, are to be found among this churchgoing minority. God alone knows how many they are, or what percentage of their class they form. There are some splendid Christians everywhere, outside as well as inside the churches, but they are probably in a minority, and from the writer's experience a small minority, in their class. Several examples could be given, but one must suffice. This was a Sunday School of over 500 scholars, with a very good superintendent who lived on terms of Christian love with his large staff of teachers. Yet he admitted that not one of them, as far as he knew, was a Christian, though they were all baptised and confirmed.

The influence of Christians must be out of all proportion to their numbers, for they are only a minority of a minority in the community; but this would appear to be only one of the reasons for the moral and spiritual sickness of our civilisation, and gives the impulse for almost any attempt to help.

If we consider the two human elements, Christians and non-Christians, we see at once that they are equally civilised. There is no difference between them in this, for the civilisation is the dominating factor with both, except occasionally in the life of a Christian, when there happens to be any clash between civilisation and Christianity. It is only at such moments that some Christians are discovered.

The decline in the number of clergy in the Church of England accompanies that of its members. There

are "about 4,000 fewer clergy at work in the parishes" than before the war,* and the quality also is said to be failing. The writer can see little objection to ordinands from the lower social classes, provided only that they are not inflicted, as they sometimes are, on more enlightened congregations.

Strange as it may seem to some of the laity, there appears little that the parson can do to get people to church. His time for visiting is limited by numerous other duties, and the effect of it is doubtful. It is well known that one minister cannot attend properly to the needs of 5,000 people, yet most of the population is to be found in parishes of from this size to as many as 15,000 inhabitants. The town parson's time is almost entirely absorbed by routine and other imperative duties. He probably gets no holiday, and his wife works as hard as he does, without stipend. House to house visitations are impossible in large parishes, as the time that can be spared for visiting is taken up with attending to the sick and others of the congregation. Large numbers will flock to hear a new preacher, but they never settle down permanently. The novelty, apparently, wears off, as this custom is not found to vary with the ability of the preacher. One of the finest preachers known to the writer in a very large diocese said to a churchwarden on being instituted to a fine but empty town church: "I shall fill this church in twelve months or resign."

* *The Church of England and the Church of Christ*, Archdeacon Rawlinson (1930), 112.

"Then you will resign," replied the warden, who knew the people; and he did, though not at the end of the year, because he had to wait for another appointment.

Let us glance at the *quality* of Institutional Christianity in England. Fuller evidence in support of what is given could be produced, if necessary, and almost to any extent.

We have seen that our worshippers, among the masses of the people, are intimately related to the non-attending majority, and no conspicuous differences are observable between the lives of the two classes as a whole. The exceptions to this are, on the one hand, criminals and the like, who we may assume to be non-attenders when their time is their own; and on the other hand many, though not all, of the best-living people, who are worshippers. The general standard of morality has now improved, through the influence of Christianity, so that little outward difference can be expected.

There is a constant stream of uneducated mothers bringing their babies to be baptised in our churches. The only meaning of the rite, to most of them, is a kind of magic that should do the child good, and at the worst cannot do it any harm. They would do anything for its welfare, and so they come. Nothing can be done about it. Hence we cannot be surprised that similar heathen views are held about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Many of our communicants think that if they take it they

will go to heaven, but if they missed once they might be lost for ever. They do not know that they are eating and drinking unworthily, or that their communion should have some relation to the Saviour. The writer once was so aghast as to become speechless, when a very "respectable" women told him that she never missed her communions because then if anything happened she knew she would be all right!

This superstition should be considered in relation to the present depleted state of the ministry. The shortage of clergy is now so great that the union of parishes is a definite policy actually being carried out. A few years ago, to the writer's knowledge, there were three neighbouring parishes in the Midlands, each with its own incumbent. Now, one of the three churches has been closed, against the wishes of the parishioners, and a single incumbent conducts one service every Sunday at each of the other two churches. Two services are now held where a few years ago there were six; and this is not an isolated example. In many parts of the country there seems nothing else to be done; but this is a degeneration and not evolution.

The causes of this decline are at least two-fold: the pressure of economics and spiritual decline. It is almost impossible for many of the clergy to live now on the stipends provided; yet religious people are more than tired of the constant appeals for money, and with increasing taxation their ability to give is decreasing with an increased

demand. As to the other difficulty, the fact that Institutional Christianity cannot keep up the supply of its own servants is not a sign of spiritual progress.

Town clergy are persistently overworked, yet they cannot do more than touch the fringe of the work, and seldom can any attempt be made for the reclaiming of souls. No time or energy are available for missionary work, and the ministry gets out of touch with it. The understaffing, however, is not the only serious feature.

A common occurrence in town parishes is to find three or four hundred people dancing, or enjoying some other amusement, in the church schools on Saturday night, followed by three or four communicants at the early service next morning, with thirty or forty people at mid-day and perhaps a hundred at night. These are not all the same people. Most of the dancers rarely, if ever, attend church, though a few are regular worshippers. It is worthy of notice that since the churches provided these amusements their congregations have dwindled. The reason is simple and was foreseen by many Christians: that the two things are totally different; the keenest people on the amusements are not the keenest Christians. The latter have no time to waste nor desire to waste it. This state of affairs has nearly broken the hearts of the spiritually-minded ministers of all denominations.

The writer knows one parish with a population of over 8,000 people, and with one parson who

ought to have been moved years ago. The parish church seats over 1,000. The Sunday morning congregation numbers less than a dozen and the evening is not much better. The large church schools, on the other hand, are crowded on the week nights with hundreds of people enjoying themselves with every kind of popular diversion. The buildings are ablaze with light and resound with music and merriment.

The following, also, is merely typical. A men's institute, provided by the church, had a hundred members and two full-sized billiard tables on which over £70 a year was taken; but not ten of the members ever came to church, though many of them attended a Sunday afternoon class, that seemed to be their substitute for worship. If it is admitted that the people should have " harmless recreations " under good conditions, it would be better for them to provide them for themselves, and they should never have been provided by the churches *at the expense of de-spiritualising Christianity.*

These few examples are culled from experience without prolonged consideration. They appear to be average instances of what is called Church life. They reveal a state of " religion " that should give food for thought. Where the secular events are so much more popular than the religious services the Churches have changed their character, and are now primarily amusement caterers and educational seminaries. They have no difficulty in raising money by their various shows, and have

come right down to the level of the natural man and his non-Christian civilisation. Some of these churches have a name to live, but their life is precisely that of the rest of the world. They are spiritually dead.

NOTE.—Since the above was written several public appeals have been made for a new religious census, notably by the Oxford Diocesan Conference, as reported in *The Times* for June 13th, 1930. This appeal was supported by Father Woodlock in a letter to the same paper a few days later (June 19th), in which he gives an estimate "that only some 11½ per cent Englishmen . . . had any vital relation to any religious denomination."

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